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France, Iran sign accord on loan

NICOSIA (R) — France and Iran signed an agreement Sunday settling a 12-year-old dispute over a \$1 billion loan to France from Iran's pre-revolutionary government, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said. Francois Scheer, director general of the French Foreign Ministry, signed the accord in Tehran with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Vafaei, it said. Under the accord, initiated in Paris in October, France will end up repaying a total of \$1.63 billion, including the interest since Iran lent the money in 1974. IRNA said. France had repaid \$630 million by 1988. It will repay \$550 million within 48 hours and the remaining \$450 million in three instalments during 1992, it added. The agency did not mention French claims to about \$1 billion to compensate for contracts Iran cancelled with French firms after the Islamic revolution in 1979. (See earlier story on page 2).

France grants asylum to 7,000, denies 13,500

PARIS (AP) — The interior ministry granted political asylum to 7,000 foreigners Sunday, but 13,500 others were ordered expelled within a month. The ministry's announcement, in the form of an order to regional authorities, did not break down the countries of origin for those granted asylum and those turned away. The people affected entered France before January 1989 and were allowed to remain while their cases were considered, the ministry said. About 193,000 residents of France have political refugee status. France has been a traditional refuge for people seeking a haven from political persecution, but it has tightened its criteria in recent years to identify and exclude economic migrants. These now include East Europeans, who were once granted asylum almost unquestioningly. A similar change of heart has taken place in most of the other 12 European Community nations as East Europeans, now free to leave their former communist homelands, turn their eyes westward towards their richer neighbours. Immigration has become an explosive social issue in France and other West European countries. In Germany and Belgium there have been riots against immigrants, who are perceived as threats to jobs in stagnating economies.

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Senior Iranian official arrives

AMMAN (J.T.) — Atallah Mohajirani, an assistant in parliamentary and legal affairs to Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, arrived here Sunday on a four-day visit to Jordan.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Mr. Mohajirani was carrying a message from Mr. Rafsanjani to His Majesty King Hussein. It did not give details.

In an arrival statement, Mr. Mohajirani said his visit was aimed at enhancing bilateral relations.

Petra said Mr. Mohajirani was on a regional tour which has already taken him to Syria and Lebanon.

He was received upon arrival by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport Ali Subeimat and senior officials as well as the Iranian charge d'affaires in Amman.

Mr. Mohajirani is one of the senior-most Iranian officials to visit Jordan following the resumption of Jordanian-Iranian diplomatic relations in February 1990.

Ex-defence minister of Iraq reappears

BAGHDAD (R) — President Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, sacked as Iraqi defence minister last month, reappeared at a meeting with the president Sunday. The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Lieutenant General Hussein Kamel Hassan attended a meeting between President Saddam and industry ministers and experts. It was the first public mention of Mr. Hassan, who also held the industry and military industrialisation portfolio, since he was sacked last month in an unexpected shake-up. Iraq's new defence minister is President Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan Al Ma'jeed.

Israel suspends 3 policemen

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli police chief Yisroel Rottenberg suspended on Sunday three policemen charged with torturing a Palestinian prisoner to extract a false confession. A police spokeswoman said Mr. Rottenberg transferred five other officers charged in the same case from an investigative unit which interrogates Arabs. The interrogators are suspected of severely beating the bound Palestinian inmate in prison two years ago to make him confess to a murder he did not commit. The suspensions will remain in effect until the end of court proceedings, the spokeswoman told Reuters.

Algerian policeman stabbed, robbed

ALGIERS (R) — A man with a beard stabbed a policeman and stole his pistol near the Muslim fundamentalist stronghold of Kouba in Algiers Saturday, the authorities said Sunday. National security headquarters said in a statement that the attacker, dressed in traditional Islamic costume, knifed the policeman in the back and neck. The victim was improving in hospital Sunday, it added.

Salvadorean leader joins peace talks with U.N. chief

UNITED NATIONS (R) — President Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador Sunday engaged in intensive talks with U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, indicating a peace pact may be within reach. The president's aides had previously said he would not come to New York for the negotiations between his government and the rebel Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) unless success in ending the country's 12-year old civil war was fairly certain. But despite his morning talks, diplomats involved in the discussions said there was no guarantee negotiations would be completed by Dec. 31 when Mr. Perez de Cuellar leaves office. All parties to the dispute had given themselves a self-imposed new year's eve deadline to arrive at a peace pact while Mr. Perez de Cuellar, a Peruvian, is still in office. His successor Boutros Ghali takes over Wednesday.

Parliament begins debate on budget

House Finance Committee finds 1992 allocations, economic plan as positive

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Lower House of Parliament Sunday began debating the draft budget for 1992 and the seven-year economic reform plan that were presented to the House by the government last month.

Debate is due to end on Monday with JD 1.27 billion budget likely to be endorsed by a narrow majority of the 80 deputies.

Several cabinet ministers said they expected at least 46 of the 80 deputies to vote in favour of the budget, which projects a deficit of JD 107 million, compared to JD351 million last year.

The rest, including the 22-member fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood bloc, their independent allies and leftists, would abstain or vote against it.

The budget reflects the programme of action of the first year of an ambitious seven-year reform plan aimed at trimming the huge deficit, rescheduling Jordan's foreign debt and improving social services.

It forecasts gross domestic product (GDP) at three per cent, compared to the one per cent achieved in 1991.

Jordan hopes to gradually reduce inflation, attract investment and reduce the budget deficit from levels close to 18 per cent of the GDP in 1991 to five per cent in 1995.

Officials say Jordan badly needs to implement the reforms

to enable it to resume talks with official and commercial creditors to reschedule part of its \$7 billion foreign debt and get new international loans.

"Very soon, when we start looking into our options, we will find ourselves stuck with little space for manoeuvre," a cabinet minister told Reuters. "But we have to go ahead with the reform plan," he said.

Sunday's debate began with the Financial Committee of the House presenting its report on the draft budget, recommending that the House endorse its various articles after introducing minor amendments to two of its clauses dealing with civil service.

The committee's rapporteur, Mutair Al Bustani presented the committee's report, hailing the budget statement as comprehensive and balanced and taking into account a fair distribution of resources to all sectors in a just and relatively fair manner.

The committee said that the budget had been well prepared in a responsible and objective manner, providing for a programme designed to ensure economic restructuring over the coming seven years, starting in 1992.

The plan, which was presented with the budget by Finance Minister Basel Jaradeh on Dec. 11, calls for a gradual increase of three per cent in gross domestic product, increased job opportunities, higher volume of exports, reducing the annual inflation rate, reducing budget deficit, reducing deficit in the balance of payments, building up foreign exchange reserves, controlling government borrowings, enhancing the financial

administration of public institutions and improving the living conditions of low-income groups.

The committee welcomed the plan as aiming to deal with economic imbalances and achieving progressive gross domestic product.

But, it noted, for such a programme to achieve its goals a national conference should be organised, grouping various economic financial and other sectors of the public and private sectors and the widest popular base for such national scheme.

The committee said that a restructuring programme should be intrinsic aimed at fulfilling national goals based on full conviction and awareness of the public of its importance. Such programme should be endorsed by a congress representing the widest possible sector of the public and should be accompanied by an appropriate mechanism for its implementation over the coming years, the committee said.

The committee recommended that the House request the government to work out and specify the appropriate plans and mechanism for the implementation of economic, financial and monetary policies for the coming years.

The 1992 budget envisages total revenues at JD 1.163 billion, including JD 832 million in domestic income, and a total expenditure of JD1.27 billion, including JD329.8 million in capital expenditure.

The committee went over all clauses of the draft budget and made the following remarks:

The draft budget indicates that the gross domestic product for 1992 could

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Scenes from Sunday's session of the Lower House of Parliament which was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and members of the Cabinet (photo by Youssef Al 'Allan)



Guaranteed white seats in parliament possible

— Mandela

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — White could be guaranteed a block of seats in parliament for a limited period, but the concept of majority rule is not negotiable, black leader Nelson Mandela said in an interview published Sunday.

Mr. Mandela, president of the African National Congress (ANC), told the Sunday Star some form of compromise was necessary to allay white fears as South Africa moves to end white-minority rule.

"Whites still fear the principle of one person, one vote, because they feel it will lead to a reverse position," he said. "They feel they will lose their privileged status, and we have to do something significant to show that in any new dispensation, they will have an effective voice."

The ANC, the main black opposition group, is working with the government and other political organisations on writing a new constitution to give the black majority voting rights.

President F.W. de Klerk said the constitution should include provisions guaranteeing rights of whites and other minorities. The ANC opposes this.

"There can be no compromise as far as the principle of majority rule is concerned. That is the essence of democracy," Mr. Mandela said. "The only compromise one could think of is something like what happened in Zimbabwe, where we are able to say we guarantee that so many seats will be held by whites. I wouldn't necessarily be against that as an individual."

Zimbabwe's white minority was guaranteed 20 of 100 seats in that country's house of assembly during a transitional period following the war against white colonial rule.

Mr. Mandela said such an arrangement would be temporary.

During the interview, he praised Mr. De Klerk for accepting the idea of an interim government but made clear the ANC and government have different views of how that government should operate.

Mr. De Klerk said earlier this month he was prepared to negotiate an interim authority, but he envisions the leadership would be in power a number of years. The ANC and other black groups want an interim government in power 18 months at most.

A lengthy interim leadership would "trap" the ANC by allowing Mr. De Klerk to delay the official transfer of power to a new, democratically elected government, Mr. Mandela said.

Jordan welcomes Bulgarian offer to host peace talks

By Mariam M. Shabin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan Sunday welcomed an offer made by the government of Bulgaria to host future bilateral and multilateral rounds of the Arab-Israeli peace talks.

"We welcome this offer from the Bulgarian government to host the peace negotiations in future rounds of talks, bilateral and multilateral," Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber told a press conference. "The date for these talks has yet to be set, but we have welcomed this offer and shall discuss this proposal with our Palestinian partners."

The Bulgarian offer to host the talks in Sofia was officially conveyed to the Jordanian government by Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Stojan Ganev, who ended a four-day visit to Jordan Sunday.

Mr. Ganev said that Bulgaria, which resumed diplomatic relations with Israel in October, supports an Arab-Israeli peace based on international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions 242 and 338.

Possibilities for investment in

In lengthy meetings with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Dr. Abu Jaber and Minister of Industry and Trade Abdullah Nsour, Mr. Ganev and a five-member delegation accompanying him discussed the Middle East peace process and relations between Jordan and Bulgaria. Trade was on top of the bilateral agenda.

Trade between Bulgaria and Jordan has historically been in Bulgaria's favour, Dr. Abu Jaber pointed out. In 1990 Jordan imported some \$20 million of commodities and foodstuffs mostly vegetables and meat from Bulgaria.

While a bilateral trade agreement was not reached during Mr. Ganev's current visit, groundwork was made for balanced trade relationship between the two countries.

The Bulgarian economy is still transforming from a state-run system to a free market economy. Recent changes in the government system in Sofia has allowed for new possibilities of investment.

Possibilities for investment in

Bulgaria by Jordanians and vice-versa was discussed. Dr. Abu Jaber said. Joint ventures between companies from both countries would also be considered.

Jordan proposed a variety of possibilities for trade in order to create a better trade balance. The export of Jordanian phosphates, cement, pharmaceuticals and other products to Bulgaria was discussed. Cooperation in the field of land transport and creating a bridge between the Arab countries and the Eastern European countries and the newly established independent states in the former Soviet Union was also discussed.

Mr. Ganev also handed an invitation to His Majesty King Hussein to visit Sofia from the Bulgarian president.

Of Bulgaria's offer to host future rounds of the Middle East peace talks Mr. Ganev said: "Hopefully the first round of multilateral talks will take place in Moscow and be successful. We believe that after Moscow there will be other rounds of multilateral talks. We are able and willing

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Israeli minister resigns; coalition faces critical week

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan went ahead with his formal resignation Sunday amid growing speculation that Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir could resign in a bid to force early elections.

Elections are scheduled for next November. Holding them early could slow down Middle East peace talks launched in Madrid two months ago and due to resume in Washington on Jan. 7.

Mr. Eitan, head of a two-man faction, announced last Tuesday he was quitting because of disagreements with the prime minister over electoral reform. He submitted his resignation to Mr. Shamir at a cabinet meeting Sunday.

His departure reduces the government's majority in the 120-seat Knesset (parliament) to eight ahead of a parliamentary vote on a state budget which some cabinet members oppose.

"It's certainly a critical week as far as the government's life span goes," Transport Minister Moshe Katzav, close to Mr. Shamir, told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

The key day is Tuesday, Mr. Eitan's resignation takes effect in 48 hours and the budget deadline is midnight.

Ultra-religious and far-right political parties in Mr. Shamir's coalition have threatened to fight the budget proposal unless they receive more money for religious schools and Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

"If we reach an understanding, we'll reach an understanding. If not, there won't be a budget and there won't be a government," Interior Minister Arye Deri of the ultra-religious Shas party told reporters.

Aides to Mr. Shamir said he would view any vote against the 79.1 billion shekel (\$33.9 billion) proposal as a vote of no-confidence that could prompt his resignation and a call for early elections.

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Israel to spend most of its housing budget in occupied land

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli government will spend most of its 1992 housing budget on homes for settlers in the occupied Arab territories, a senior official said Sunday.

The move was bound to draw renewed criticism from Washington, which describes Jewish settlement in the occupied territories as an obstacle to peace.

The Israeli official said that two-thirds of state-funded housing for 1992 would be built in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The official, who requested anonymity in confirming recent news reports, said that of 7,500 housing units called for in the 1992 budget, 5,000 would be built in the West Bank and Gaza.

He said Finance Minister Yitzhak Mordechai had agreed to the demands of two ultra-rightist parties in exchange for their votes in support of the new budget. Parliament must pass the budget by midnight on Tuesday.

Minister-without-portfolio Rehavam Zeevi of Moledet, one of the ultra-nationalist factions, told Reuters: "I won't confirm or deny it. I refuse to negotiate with the press.

It is important to build in all Israel, from the Hermon Mountain (in the occupied Golan Heights) to Eilat, from the sea to the Jordan River."

The Jewish state sorely needs \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees for Soviet immigration. The U.S. Congress is expected to review Israeli settlement policies when deciding whether to approve the guarantees early next year.

The Israeli government, the country's biggest builder, has sponsored a housing boom in Israel and the occupied territories to alleviate a crunch since Soviet Jews began arriving in 1989.

Asked whether planning so much building in the occupied territories might jeopardise U.S. aid, the government source replied: "I think we will get the guarantees."

Israel, which receives more than \$3 billion a year in U.S. aid, has promised Washington not to spend the money in the occupied lands. But the aid frees other funds for use by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's hardline government as it likes.

The cost of building 5,000 housing units in the occupied territories is estimated at about \$350 million.

The official said that under the accord between Mr. Mordechai and the Moledet and Tebiya factions, another 68 million shekels (\$30 million) would go to roads and projects on Arab lands.

In addition, 12,500 housing units included in the 1991 budget but not yet built are to go up in 1992. The official declined to say how many would be built in the occupied territories.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, a hawk who opposes the Arab-Israeli peace talks, has been charged with the construction. Peace activists say housing start-ups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip jumped 50 per cent in 1991 alone.

Analysts said a major consequence of Mr. Mordechai's accord with the right-wing factions is that more immigrants will move to the occupied territories where cheap housing is abundant.

About 40,000 immigrants, almost all of them Soviet Jews, have come to Israel since 1989 and officials expect up to one million more to arrive by 1995.

Algerian victory could pose dilemma for Muslim leaders

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Muslim fundamentalist leaders could find themselves in conflict with extremists supporters demanding an instant Islamic state if final results confirm their sweeping advance in Algeria's general election.

Diplomats and commentators say Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) leaders will have to balance the demands of hardliners against the realities of power.

"We can in no case imagine Algeria ... totally isolated from the world which surrounds it," FIS provisional leader Abdul Kader Hachani said in a conciliatory interview on French television.

Several diplomats said the crunch could come over the fate of FIS leaders Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, detained by the army in June on charges of armed conspiracy against the state.

"They will want to get them out, and if the army holds firm..." commented one diplomat, leaving the rest unsaid.

Soothing words for a suspicious Western world came from another leader on Friday as official provisional results gave the FIS 167 of the first 206 seats won outright in the 430-seat parliament.

Mohammad Said said his party planned a "modern Islamic state," unlike the image Western countries tried to portray. The FIS says it has already won

189 seats and one diplomat said he believed they had 202, just 14 short of outright majority. A runoff, where no candidate gained a majority, will be held between the two leading parties on Jan. 16.

The results have already sent shock waves through the media in France, Algeria's former colonial ruler and its biggest trading partner.

The election gains have been welcomed by fundamentalists in the Arab World and are expected by many to fuel aspirations there and among the millions of Muslims living in European countries.

Shiite Muslim-ruled Iran's Tehran Times said the victory in Sunni Muslim Algeria was of "exceptional significance" in the Arab World with "repercussions bound to expand beyond the Algerian frontiers."

Western diplomats and other observers said FIS leaders faced a difficult balancing act.

The FIS only decided to join the general election after a bitter internal battle between pragmatists and the hardline wing which wanted to wait for growing poverty to give them chance to seize power through popular discontent.

"They might not like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but it has a lot of leverage," said one Western diplomat, referring to Algeria's need for overseas

confidence to help it combat crippling foreign debts of some \$25 billion.

Another said that, provided stability was maintained, the FIS was likely to be more capitalist than the former socialist government and could continue to attract investment.

It was unlikely to change laws on oil and gas, passed just ahead of the election, to make overseas investment attractive, he said.

FIS extremists have demanded an Islamic state without a vote and will want rapid change. Last June, street demonstrations led to clashes with security forces and the army and 55 people were killed. The election due then was postponed.

The National Liberation Front (FLN), which ruled Algeria as a one-party state for 29 years, finished third with a mere 16 seats, according to the latest official results. The Liberal Front for Socialist Forces came in second with 20 seats.

The run-off for the remaining seats will be held Jan. 16. Hocine Ait Ahmed, leader of the Front for Socialist Forces and a hero of Algeria's eight-year war of independence from France, expressed hope his party could fare better in three weeks. "I'm serene," he said. "The FIS is a serious phenomenon, but

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Khartoum acknowledges making inconclusive peace contacts

KHARTOUM (AP) — The government acknowledged for the first time Saturday it held inconclusive peace talks with a breakaway rebel faction, a manoeuvre apparently designed to widen the split within the rebel movement in south Sudan.

An aide to Sudan's military ruler Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir said in an interview with the state-owned newspaper that the talks were held in Nairobi with representatives of Lam Akol and Reik Mashar, co-leaders of a rebel group known as Nasir faction but failed to say when.

The government has been denying such contacts as well as other reports on military coordination with the faction. The reports surfaced following a series of military successes by the Nasir group which claims to have seized half the territory formerly won by the mainstream rebel Sudan's People's Liberation Army (SPLA) of Colonel John Garang.

"The Sudanese government did not tilt for one side of the rebellion against the other," Mr. Haj said.

The rebels control almost all south Sudan with the exception of half dozen main garrison towns still in the hands of the Khartoum government.

In the interview with "Al Sudan Al Hadeeth," Ali Al Haj, a member of the peace and foreign relations committee in the ruling junta, failed to say when the talks were held.

"We decided that it was natural to move for evaluation of the event (split) and a decision has been taken for a direct contact

with this group to know their intention and their aims," Mr. Haj said.

He said Nasir group negotiators had requested to go back to their leadership following the talks "which served in breaking the barriers and enabled us to directly know their (rebel) intention and their aims. And we left the issue at that point."

Mr. Haj said Gen. Bashir's government has tried but failed to reach any solution with the SPLA.

"The results we reached were all the same, 'doors without keys,' all the keys of the issue are in the hands of Garang," he said.

He said the split between the rebels has resulted in an indefinite postponement of a government meeting with Garang people.

The rebels split into two groups in August when Mr. Akol and Mr. Mashar accused Col. Garang of waging a dictatorial reign of terror within the movement and established himself an alternate leader seeking secession for south Sudan. Since then, the two factions have been at war with each other.

The split came few days before a scheduled meeting between representatives of the government and Col. Garang.

"We have accepted the postponement because it makes no sense of reach an agreement with one side just to face another rebellion from the other," Mr. Haj said.

Mr. Haj said it was his government opinion that the peace negotiations should be with one group, "unified or in coalition."

He said the government has

decided to wait for a possible agreement between the two rebel factions, in a month or two as the SPLA had suggested.

"Garang still holds all the keys of his movement and controls it," Mr. Haj admitted.

Nevertheless, Mr. Haj said the atmosphere is now far more better for reaching a peaceful solution.

"It is now better than any time before... the movement which had been unified for more than nine years is now fractured. Garang is now known not to have the absolute control over the movement and the west and the african states have known that too," he said.

But when asked which solution are nearer than the other, the political or the military one, Mr. Haj said: "The military option is the one chosen by the rebel movement. It is fighting the Sudanese army and it considers it its target. This is a fact that cannot be jumped over."

The government "therefore will not discard the military option as a tactical option necessitated by the fact of defending the unity of the nation and the citizens. It is a bad option but we are driven to it," he said.

Mr. Haj said meanwhile that over 10,000 SPLA troops have defected and entered Uganda where they announced loyalty to the Nasir group in the Upper Nile. He gave no details.

The SPLA took up arms in 1983 to demand greater autonomy, economic and administrative reforms for the mostly Christian and animist south from the Muslim-dominated government in Khartoum.

Iran seizes passport of Swiss diplomat in Tehran

BERNE (R) — A diplomatic row between Iran and Switzerland deepened when the Swiss government said Iranian airport guards confiscated the passport of one of its envoys to Tehran Sunday and prevented her boarding a flight home.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Marco Camerini said the passport of Christa Felber, a registered diplomat, was taken from her at Tehran airport in what was seen as revenge for the arrest of an Iranian national outside Iran's embassy in Berne last week.

He said the passport was returned within hours after a "strong protest" by the Swiss government.

The row between the two countries flared last Monday when Swiss police with an Interpol warrant arrested an Iranian as he left his country's embassy in Berne, the Swiss capital.

The man, who Switzerland says did not have diplomatic immunity, was wanted in France in connection with the murder in Paris in August of former Iranian Prime Minister Shapur Bakhtiar.

According to the Swiss news agency ATS, Switzerland's charge d'affaires in Tehran, Walter Haffner, has closed the embassy until further notice because of the row and the increasing pressure put on his seven staff in the city.

Mr. Camerini said diplomatic relations between the two countries were not broken but normal diplomatic activity had been interrupted.

The embassy closure effectively means there is no longer any point of contact between Iran and the United States, since Switzerland has officially represented Washington's interests in Iran since the two countries broke their ties in 1979.

Mr. Bakhtiar, condemned to die by Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution, was stabbed to death in his Paris suburban home on Aug. 6 along with his secretary.

The man arrested in Berne last week, whose name has not been released, is suspected by French police of having helped Mr. Bakhtiar's assassins escape.

Swiss officials said the man arrived in Switzerland on a tourist visa in September and was never registered as a diplomat by the Iranian embassy.

French official in Tehran to sign financial accord

NICOSIA (R) — A senior French Foreign Ministry official, in Tehran to sign an accord on Sunday settling a 12-year financial dispute, had talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, Tehran Radio reported.

It said Ministry General Secretary Francois Scheer arrived late Saturday "for negotiations in order to solve the financial dispute and sign the final agreement on the matter."

France and Iran have been trying to work out a solution to the one-billion-dollar dispute for two years.

The accord was initiated in Paris in October, but the issue was complicated by allegations Iran was involved in the August murder of former Iranian Premier Shapur Bakhtiar in Paris.

Mr. Scheer told Mr. Velayati greater contact and exchange of views between officials of the two foreign ministries were needed after the final agreement was signed, Tehran radio said.

It said Mr. Scheer "stressed understanding and cooperation in the new phase of bilateral relations" and Mr. Velayati welcomed his proposal to continue cooperation.

"The sensitivity of the situation and the world require that the continuing talks lead to action and increased cooperation," Mr. Velayati was quoted as saying.

Tehran has always denied involvement in Mr. Bakhtiar's assassination, blaming it on infighting among dissident groups.

But Iranian exiles in Paris accuse the Iranian government of sending murder squads to assassinate dissidents abroad.

Mr. Bakhtiar, the Shah's last prime minister and leader of an exile faction opposed to Tehran's Islamic government, had been condemned to death by Tehran.

A French judge investigating the murder has issued an arrest warrant for Hossein Sheikhatyar, adviser to Iran's post and telecommunications minister, and an Iranian detained in France has implicated top Iranian officials.

Diplomatic tension grew last week when Swiss police detained an Iranian embassy official in Berne, the fourth arrest in the case. France is asking for the extradition of Zeyar Sarhadi, believed to have helped Mr. Bakhtiar's killers escape.

Iran has protested at the arrest and warned the Swiss not to extradite the man. The Swiss government said Iranian airport guards confiscated the passport of one of its envoys to Tehran on Sunday and prevented her boarding a flight home.

The financial dispute between France and Iran was one of the last obstacles preventing normal relations, soured in the past by Middle East bomb attacks in Paris and the detention of French hostages by Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon.

The dispute centres on a one-billion-dollar loan the Shah of Iran made to the French atomic energy commission in 1974. The loan was meant to pay for a nuclear plant in Iran, a project cancelled after the Shah was toppled in the 1979 revolution that brought the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to power.

France has already repaid a preliminary \$630 million. Tehran wants the rest and another \$1 billion in interest, while Paris claims a similar sum to compensate for contracts Iran cancelled with French firms after 1979.

France played down the diplomatic importance of the visit by sending Mr. Scheer rather than Foreign Minister Roland Dumas.

Israeli coalition faces critical week

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stance in the U.S.-sponsored peace talks with Arab states and Palestinians will win a better deal for Israel.

Despite the turmoil, Mr. Shamir aide Yossi Abimeir said Israel still planned to show up for resumed peace talks next week.

Mr. Shamir tightened his grip on Likud at a party convention last week whereas the rival Labour Party is still embroiled in

a leadership battle between party chief Shimon Peres and former head Yitzhak Rabin.

Asked last week if he could serve another four years in office, the 76-year-old prime minister told the newspaper Yedioth Aharnoth: "At the moment, I feel no limitations."

Mr. Shamir formed his current cabinet 38 months ago after his coalition with the more dovish Labour fell over peace moves.

Algerian Muslim leaders face dilemma

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Algeria is a long way from being an Iran.

Non-fundamentalist parties are working on alliances to block the FIS, and hope a higher turnout can help. Only 58 per cent of Algeria's 13.3 million voters cast ballots Thursday.

Results in about 50 seats have been appealed to the National Elections Commission.

Authorities said the attacks included a drive-by shooting that killed a soldier, and an apparent suicide attack by a motorist on a checkpoint that killed a police officer and the driver.

Other attacks included a drive-by shooting with sub-machine guns on a police patrol. At least four people were injured in the incidents, police said.

Mr. Hachani of the FIS tried in his French television interview to dispel fears his party would impose harsh medieval rule on Algeria.

Women will not be forced to stay at home, he said, nor will Iranian-style people's courts be installed.

"We will preserve all liberties and give the people the right to choose their leaders," Mr. Hachani said.

The party rejects "evil, hate and aggression" and hopes to establish peaceful relations with all nations, he said.

It was an apparent acknowledgement that Algeria's severe economic problems can only be overcome with Western investment.

The real prize sought by the FIS, whose support comes from the urban young and unemployed, is the office of president. Mr. Benjedid has enormous power, and the fundamentalists want him to call early presidential elections before his term expires in 1993.

The presidency is responsible for defence, meaning Mr. Benjedid retains control of the armed forces. He is also the sole power who can launch reforms of the 1989 constitution that guarantees political pluralism.

The parliament has the power to promulgate laws. But legal changes affecting individual liberties, like forcing women to wear Islamic headscarves, may impinge on the constitution.

Mr. Benjedid promised an early presidential vote June, after fundamentalist campaign violence compelled him to order a state of emergency and postpone the original June 27 parliamentary election date. But last week, he warned that early elections would hinge on stability.

Attacks against police and soldiers claimed three lives just ahead of the parliamentary elections, but were hushed up to avoid public panic.

Israeli minister doubts U.S. assurances on Soviet nukes

TEL AVIV (R) — Science Minister Yuval Neeman, father of Israel's atomic energy programme, said Sunday he doubted U.S. assurances that the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union was in good hands.

"I think there is something to worry about... despite what the United States has said," Mr. Neeman told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting.

"We are talking about an army that is an army of one, the former Soviet army. The loyalty of the officer corps is not at all clear... and so the suspicion that nuclear tactical weapons will be used to disappear is in my eyes very serious and for us especially dangerous," he said.

U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney Saturday backed President George Bush's statement earlier in the week that centralised control of the vast Soviet arsenal was intact but warned

some weapons might eventually fall into the wrong hands.

Israel fears Arabs might obtain such weapons.

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev handed over the control system of the 30,000-odd nuclear weapons to Russian leader Boris Yeltsin Wednesday.

The four nuclear republics — Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Byelorussia — have agreed Mr. Yeltsin should have authority to fire the weapons in consultation with their leaders. Ukraine wants a more concrete power of veto.

Mr. Neeman, a physics professor who visited the former Soviet Union in the last year, insisted tactical nuclear weapons were not limited to the four republics.

"For example, I'm convinced that there are such tactical weapons in the Muslim republics opposite China. It's obvious that there would have to be tactical nuclear weapons there," Mr.

Neeman said.

Israel, which foreign reports say has hundreds of its own nuclear weapons, has warned repeatedly of a "nuclear Middle East" as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Israeli military reporters briefed by deputy army chief Amnon Shahak last week reported the military was exploring ways to defend Israel's home front in case of nuclear attack though military officials denied he mentioned such plans.

General Shabak said the nuclear threat would not materialise in 1992, but some Arab states might reach nuclear potential in the next several years, the military officials said.

Israel refuses comment on its nuclear capability other than to say it would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East.

Report: S. Arabia, Kuwait to pay for Moscow talks

CAIRO (AP) — Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will pay for the 32-nation Mideast multilateral peace talks to be held in Moscow next month, a newspaper reported Sunday.

The government's daily Al Ahram newspaper, in a dispatch from its Moscow correspondent, quoted a senior Arab diplomatic source as saying that the Arab decision came after Russian President Boris Yeltsin said that he will be happy to host the talks but that the Russian Federation cannot afford to pay for it.

Mahmoud Kilky, press attache in the Saudi embassy in Cairo, was unable to confirm the newspaper report, saying he had received no official announcement from his government on the subject.

Al Ahram said that it is likely that Yeltsin will personally inaugurate the multilateral talks Jan. 28 because he wishes to improve relations with some Arab states.

Kuwait has always maintained normal relations with Moscow, but conservative Saudi Arabia desisted against ties with the former communist superpower. Relations were reestablished in 1991 after Moscow's supportive role during the Gulf war which ended Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

The fate of the multilateral talks has been uncertain because of the Dec. 25 resignation of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the formation of a new commonwealth which replaces the Soviet Union.

Mr. Yeltsin controls most for-

mer Soviet institutions and has resumed most of its duties. But according to Al Ahram, Mr. Yeltsin said the Russian Federation will have difficulty finding the necessary hard currency to pay for the expenses of the multilateral talks.

The United States and the Soviet Union were co-sponsors of the three-day Mideast conference which was inaugurated in Madrid, Spain, Oct. 30.

The two countries continued to be co-sponsors for the bilateral talks between Israel and Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian and Lebanese delegations in Washington earlier this month. But the Soviet role was minimal because of the political turbulence in Moscow.

While the bilateral talks will

address trying to end the state of war between Israel and the front-line Arab states, the multilaterals are designed to discuss broader subjects between countries in the Middle East like water, environment and nuclear disarmament issues.

The bilateral talks, which are scheduled to resume in Washington Jan. 7 or 8, have made no progress. The Syrians and the Palestinians have said they will not attend the multilateral talks unless there is tangible progress in the bilateral discussions.

The multilateral talks are expected to be attended by foreign ministers of Israel and Arab countries, other Middle East countries like Turkey and Iran, European countries, Canada, Japan and the two co-sponsors.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
18:00	Boat
18:05	Clementine
18:10	News in French
18:15	Weekly Sports Magazine
18:30	News in Hebrew
18:35	News in Arabic
18:40	Hoy Dad
18:45	Nippon
18:50	News in English
18:55	Gabriels Fire
EVENING TIMES	
19:05	Fair
19:10	(Source) Dubai
19:15	Dubai
19:20	As
19:25	Maghreb
19:30	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 310740	
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 637285	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terrence Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625343	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 772261	
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751	
Assunta International Church Tel. 683326	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 823824, 654922	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bullish supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Clouds increase gradually in the evening and rain are expected in the northern parts of the Kingdom. A drop in temperatures will take place and winds will be northerly moderate. In Amman, it will be northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	0/9
Aqaba	6/17
Deserts	-2/12
Jordan Valley	9/17
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 17. Humidity readings: Amman 72 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:	
Dr. Bahjat Badr	849362
Dr. Mohammed Abu Zeid	675480
Dr. Adnan Mansour	898140
Dr. Hama Mansour	748364
First pharmacy	661912
Fordons pharmacy	778336
Al Asena pharmacy	637055
Natounk pharmacy	625672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
IRBID:	
Dr. Omar Tahtamoni	(-)
Al Sharan pharmacy	275825
ZARQA:	
Dr. Hisham Sharabati	(-)
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	630341
Rescue	199
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	832511
Hotel Complaints	605900
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	
Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	815615
Repairs:	
Abdali Telephone Repairs	623101
Jordan Television	661101
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Int'l Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:	
Husseini Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	642516
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Mallat, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	664174
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	842645
Al-Musharraf Hospital	667279
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Insan, Al-Musharraf	77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf	77111/25
Army, Marka	891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990
IRBID:	
Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Great Catholic Hospital	(02)272755
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital	(02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
08:00	Sana (RJ)
09:00	Damascus (RJ)
09:15	Riyadh (RJ)
09:15	Jeddah (RJ)
09:30	Dhahran (RJ)
09:40	Larissa (RJ)
09:45	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:30	Beirut (RJ)
10:35	Bangkok (RJ)
10:40	Cairo (RJ)
10:45	Amman (RJ)
10:50	Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
10:55	Yerevan (RJ)

Other Carriers (Terminal 2)

MARKET PRICES

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

08:00	Sanas (RJ)
9:00	Damascus (RJ)
9:15	Riyadh (RJ)
9:30	Jeddah (RJ)
9:36	Dhahran (RJ)
9:40	Larnaca (RJ)
9:45	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:00	Beirut (RJ)
16:25	Bangkok (RJ)
17:00	Cairo (RJ)
17:25	Istanbul (RJ)
19:50	Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:28	

House debate on budget highlights differing priorities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament Sunday debated the 1992 draft budget law and made remarks on the Financial Committee's report on the general budget law.

Deputy Sheikh Faisal Al Jazi called on the government to connect a number of villages in the south badia region with electricity and water, construct roads and expand the health centres in the area. He also called on the government to build schools and to upgrade Al Hussainieh, Eil and Wadi Araba sub-regions to sub-districts. He further called for an increase to the salaries of retired servicemen.

Mohammad Al Alawneh, who represents the independent Islamic Bloc at the House, said the state budget for any country is an indicator of the strength of its economy and its social status. He added that the budget reflects the ability of the country to make its own decisions.

He noted that the draft budget law for the year 1992 is different from the previous draft laws. He pointed out that the loans and indebtedness had left a negative impact on the country's economy and increased its social problems such as poverty and unemployment.

He stressed the importance of holding a national conference to discuss the economic reform programme to be attended by economic experts and advisors and called on the government to involve the agricultural sector in formulating the agricultural policy.

On the unemployment problem, Mr. Alawneh called for the creation of new posts in local productive businesses and suggested that each family in the rural areas be granted an interest free loan of JD 3000 to start its own income-generating business.

He stressed the need for implementing administrative reform and asked that right man be put into the right place.

Deputy Abdul Salam Freihat, from Ajloun, called on the government to set up a network of agricultural roads in the district and to improve the existing roads. He also called on the government to connect a number of villages in the district to the electricity and water networks and to improve health services.

Deputy Issa Al Abed Al Rimoni, from Jerash, called on the government to upgrade Jerash district to a governorate and to upgrade some village councils to municipalities. He also called for improving health services, expanding Jerash hospital and building a new hospital.

In a memorandum presented to the Parliament's secretariat, Mr. Rimoni called for improving the standard of basic and higher education and for assisting poor families.

Deputy Fawzi Tuameh, who spoke for the Constitution Bloc, said that the 1992 budget is a service budget. He called for directing special attention to the agricultural sector, saying that the agricultural situation is deteriorating yearly.

He called on the government to exert every possible effort to advance inter-Arab relations. Dr. Tuameh called for reconsidering the educational philosophy as well as the role of information. He emphasised the need to direct information to serve the national development goals.

Balqa Governorate deputies Dr. Abdullah Ensour, Dr. Abdul Latif Arabiyat, Ibrahim Khreisat, Sultan Al Adwan, Marwan Al Hmoud, Dr. Tuameh, Samir Kassar and Dr. Awni Al Bashir called for upgrading Zay and Arida Sub-regions to sub-districts and to create sub-districts in Mahes, Fubels, Ain Al Basha, Eira and Yarka.

Speaking for the National Bloc, Dr. Mohammad Addoub Al Zaben said the 1992 budget constitutes the cornerstone to the national economic reform programme and the restructuring of the economic, social, administrative and informational work. He noted that the 1992 budget is a balanced and integrated one, and praised the government for increasing allocations to the health and youth sectors.

Costs of health services are increasing daily and citizens are finding themselves unable to meet such costs, he said. There fore, there is a genuine need for cost effective health services, Dr. Zaben said.

He added that health is not only restricted to curative services but also includes sanitation. Dr. Zaben called for directing special care to the agricultural sector, saying that the five year economic reform programme has not directed attention to it.

He also called on the government to find urgent solutions to the unemployment problem and stressed the role of the private sector in addressing it along with the government.

Deputy Abdul Hafith Alawi, who spoke for himself and on behalf of Deputy Ahmad Qutaish

Dams hold 51.05m M³ of water

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) announced Sunday that the Kingdom's dams now contain a total of 51.05 million cubic metres of water, an excellent level reached at the outset of the winter season in Jordan, officials said.

A JVA official said that King Talal Dam, which has a capacity of 85 million cubic metres, has now gathered 39.5 million, up from nine million at the beginning of the winter season.

The official said that the Wadi Al Arab Dam now contains five million out of a capacity of 17 million. The dams of Wadi Shueib and Kafra are now full with 3.5 and 2.25 million metres.

Sharhabel Dam has 800,000 cubic metres out of a capacity of 3.5 million cubic metres of water.

'Gross violations' uncovered at Jordan-Gulf Bank

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A special committee has completed investigations into the affairs of the Jordan-Gulf Bank and submitted its findings to the authorities for possible legal action against some of the former officials of the bank, which was taken over by the government in August 1989, informed sources said Sunday.

"The findings of the committee, including a scrutiny of the bank's accounts and other documents, have been handed over to the concerned authorities," said one source.

The source, who preferred anonymity, said there were enough grounds for "dozens of cases against former officials of

the bank." The source refused to elaborate.

Another source familiar with the investigations said the committee had found "gross violations of Jordanian banking regulations" and "not only gross irregularities in banking practices and accepted norms but also blatant mishandling of public funds."

It is expected that the concerned authorities will soon start legal proceedings against the people implicated in the affair. But the cases, as and when filed, will be tried by civil courts, perhaps by a special panel of judges so that the trials could be expedited.

Maher Al Waked, a banking expert who headed the investigations, confirmed that the scrutiny of the bank's affairs was over but declined to make

any further comment.

Banking and other sources say that the financial status of the Jordan-Gulf Bank was not as complicated to unravel as the case was with Petra Bank, another bank which was taken over by the government at the same time as Jordan-Gulf.

Petra Bank was ordered liquidated in April 1990 after it was established that its financial status had deteriorated too far for any remedial measures. Cases related to the collapse of Petra Bank, once the second largest commercial bank in Jordan, are being tried by a military court.

(Some of those being tried in the Petra Bank cases could also face charges in the possible Jordan-Gulf cases in view of what banking circles describe as the close links between the

management of the two banks).

The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has kept Jordan-Gulf afloat by pumping money — said to be around JD 25 million to JD 30 million — into the troubled institution, which employs close to 500 people at its 20 branches in the Kingdom.

Total net losses of the bank are estimated to be in the region of \$100 million, according to banking sources. The shareholders have lost all their holdings, but unlike Petra Bank, most of the Jordan-Gulf equity holders were from the middle class and the loss "was particularly felt by the public," said one banking executive.

Many formulas had been considered and still being stu-

died to address the problems of Jordan-Gulf, including possible mergers with other banking institutions, but no decision has been taken yet, according to the sources.

One source said Jordan-Gulf "is salvageable since it did not suffer as much as Petra Bank," and that "the dominant feelings is that Jordan-Gulf should not be ordered liquidated."

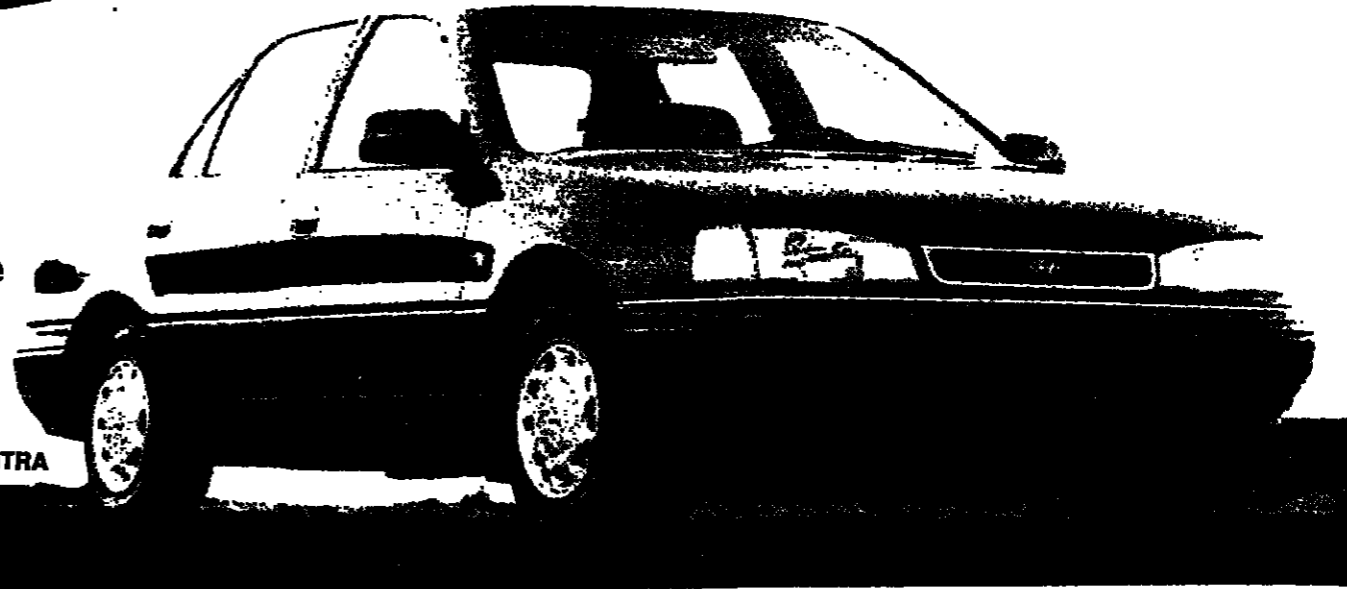
"There is not shortage of funds at the Jordan-Gulf Bank and there is a strong argument among banking circles against liquidating it," said another source. "The funds that the CBJ pumped into Jordan-Gulf in its capacity as the lender of the last resort could be recovered from the bank in due course of time..."

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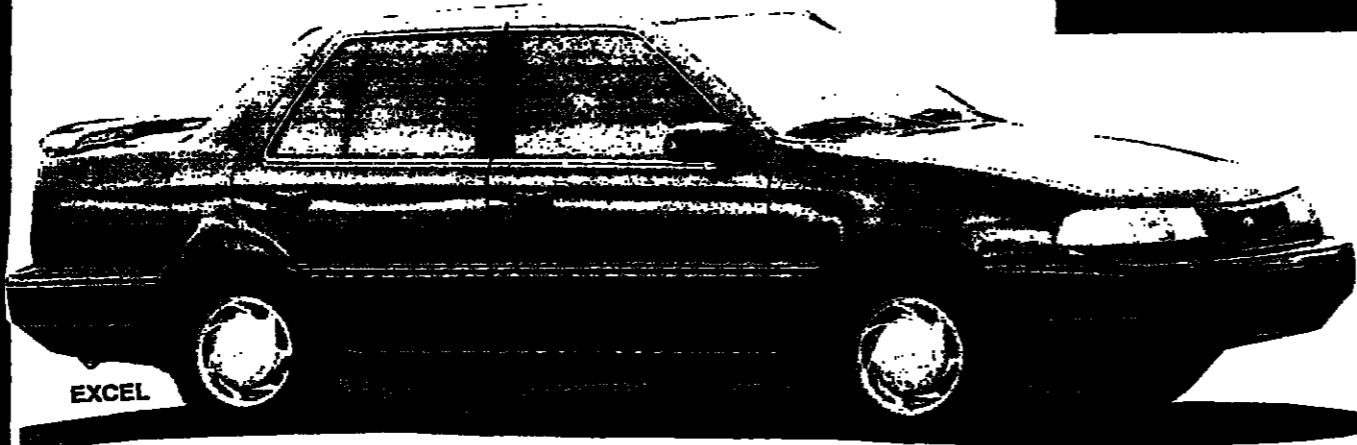
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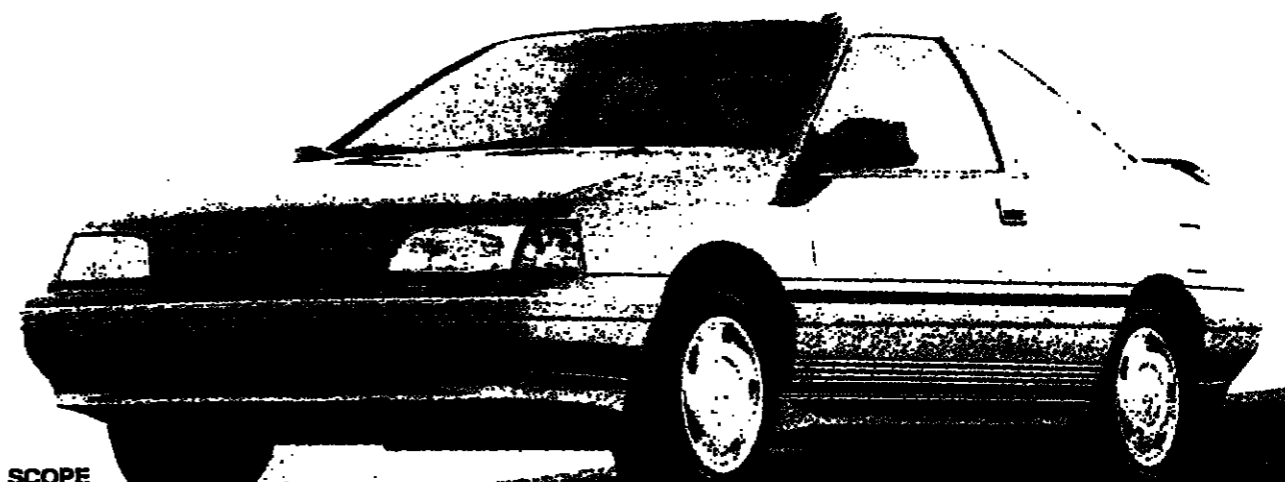
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Weekly Political Pulse

Palestinian sovereignty is essential for solving Mideast issues

By Waleed Sadi

A lot has been talked about an eventual federation between Jordan and Palestine serving as the overall political and legal framework for the resolution on the fate and future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yet it would be hard to imagine Jordan consenting to such a deal if it entailed "federation" with the Palestinian people in the occupied territories without also annexing their lands. To insist on such a plan would be tantamount to granting Israel a clear opportunity to have the cake and eat it too. Since Tel Aviv is clearly promoting such a panacea to its woes and fears about the future, it must be prepared to pay the necessary price for it by granting the Palestinians the right to exercise sovereignty over their territories as a first step towards the fulfillment of that ideal solution to the Palestinian problem.

Clearly there is a consensus among the Palestinian constituency that the West Bank and Gaza Strip on their own may not be viable economically or even politically and need to link up with Jordan with which it already enjoys strong and organic ties in every conceivable way. At the same time, one has to reckon with the sentiment in Jordan where Jordanian nationalism is on the rise rather than on the decline. One sees and feels the manifestation of

this upsurge in Jordanian sentiment to preserve Jordanian identity in many areas and sectors and it is only natural to expect an additional assertion of such attitudes and policy orientation as time gets closer to the implementation of the federation idea. It was not surprising, therefore, to hear many Jordanian voices calling for restraint before Jordan leaps into the federation formula for fear that such a masterplan may negatively affect their Jordanian identity. So there are sensitivities on this point on both sides of the River Jordan that would need airing out before the federation scheme can be executed properly and thoroughly.

To begin with, such a sensible plan would call for a national conference to be attended by both sides, i.e., the Jordanians and the Palestinians, to spell out and define their roles and aspirations in the proposed federation. It is being taken for granted that His Majesty King Hussein will head any such federation at all times in order to provide it with the necessary stability and security. So, the bottom line in this vein is to grant the Palestinian people the right to enjoy full sovereignty over their territories as a sine qua non for the achievement of the federation plan which all parties including Israel, appear to promote. Anything short of Palestinian sovereignty would simply abort the federation scheme and

torpedo all serious efforts to bring it about.

If Israel insists by force and in defiance of international legitimacy to cling to the Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, then there would be no escape from forging a federation between Israel and the Palestinians along the lines of the original partition plan promulgated by the U.N. General Assembly in 1947. Yet Israel fears such a federation scheme with the Palestinians because it could serve as a platform to resurrect the U.N. partition plan and therefore dreads the full implications of that early formula to settle the Palestinian problem. The remaining viable solution, therefore, lies in a federation between the Jordanians and the Palestinians after the Palestinians exercise sovereign control over their territories. Whether this is in the cards is another question. Viewed in proper perspective, this Jordanian-Palestinian federation would stand a better chance of realization if it is promoted as if now in order to serve clear notice on all sides, including Israel, that such a solution is being seriously entertained by both Arab sides. This may serve as an inducement for Israel to relinquish control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of the ongoing negotiations.

Arrogance at its best

THE ISRAELI defence establishment is up in arms these days against what it describes as Muslim and Arab nuclear threats. Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens has been quoted as warning the Knesset that "Muslim countries are building nuclear arsenals and the number of Arab countries seeking a nuclear capacity is growing." Arens went on to say that his country did not believe any "nuclear arms supervisory" arrangements could monitor or contain this dangerous process. He thus concluded that "Israel will have to deploy accordingly."

Echoing Arens' words, Chief of Staff General Amnon Shahak said on Friday that although Israel did not currently face a regional nuclear threat, "there is no doubt that Iraq and other countries will continue to develop a nuclear capability."

This campaign coincides with another that expresses Israeli concern and fear of nuclear proliferation through the newly independent Islamic republics in Central Asia. Israel does this with the full knowledge that it is the one and only nuclear power in the region. Israeli defence officials must have a domestic cause to campaign for, namely growing demands for cuts in defence spending in a country where more pressing issues, like immigrants, require diversion of funds and where aid providers are showing increasing impatience with Israeli intransigence. However, domestic issues are not the only cause for Israeli rhetoric. With the newly emerging world order, the Israelis want to assert themselves as a nuclear power and to send signals to potential "buyers" and "sellers" of nuclear technology that it won't tolerate any proliferation into the region or any hostile posture by the newly emerging Islamic powers in Central Asia.

Israel could even be entertaining a pre-emptive "non-nuclear" strike against "Islamic" nuclear targets or Arab nuclear research capabilities. We cannot deny that Israeli fears are genuine. However, we hold Israel as responsible for its own fears. It was the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East region. Israel continues to occupy Arab and Muslim lands. It occupies Islam's third holiest place, Jerusalem. It continues to oppress the Palestinians and deny them their lawful rights. It continues to defy international law and U.N. Security Council resolutions on the Middle East conflict. Israel, the home for all incoming Jews from all corners of the globe, poses a great threat to the peoples, lands and resources of its neighbouring countries. So what does or should a state of that kind expect from both Muslims and Arabs?

The Israelis ought to understand that whatever "arrangement" might be made to stem the proliferation of nuclear technology into the region will not do. Nuclear technology is inherent in scientific progress and Arab and Muslim countries are on that road. Sooner or later those who seek nuclear power will get it. When that happens, and God forbid, when the conflict reaches its zenith, Israel can only blame itself. Even the Jewish Masada spirit will not save it or its cousins in the Middle East from the horrors of a nuclear holocaust. And only peace, real peace, can save Israel and its neighbours of a modern-day Armageddon.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE RESULTS of the Algerian parliamentary elections came as a natural outcome of the failure of the National Liberation Front (FLN), which had ruled the country singlehandedly for 30 years, to fulfil the people's aspirations, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily in commenting on the elections. There is no doubt that the second round of elections will give the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) a majority in parliament, justifying its takeover of government affairs in Algeria, said the paper. The FIS victory clearly indicates the wide popular support for the Islamists and shows the people's total dissatisfaction with the performance of the FLN over the past three decades, the paper pointed out. It said that over the past 30 years, the single party led the country into a state of near chaos, with corruption and poverty widespread and leaving the national economy in shambles. The country, which is rich with oil, is now burdened with a \$25 billion debt and the Algerians lead a miserable life instead of living in prosperity like other oil-rich nations, the paper continued. It said that the single party ignored democracy, disrespected human rights and stifled the voices of the opposition, following the example of the former communist bloc which had people living in poverty and backwardness under a single party rule. But the paper at the same time expressed apprehension about the future plans of the Algerian army and the president, should they decide to disregard the elections results. It also warned FIS against adopting a narrow-minded policy that could nip the young democracy in the bud.

A Columnist in Al Ra'i Sunday warned that the negotiations with Israel could take up to the end of the present century and might not lead to anything at all as long as the United Nations is reluctant to take a practical step to force Israel to respect its resolutions. Mahmoud Rimawi said that since the Syrians and Lebanese claim to have a special, strong relationship leading to unity and as long as the Jordanians and Palestinians are willing to forge a confederation leading to unity, one can only hope that these states will form a major confederation that can have a stronger negotiating position with Israel and could impose its will on the United Nations to force the Israelis to comply with its resolutions. The writer said that the Arabs had waited for so long for Israel to withdraw its forces from occupied Arab land and have been seeking the help of the United Nations and the United States to achieve peace based on justice, but to date they accomplished nothing because they remain disunited. He said that as long as the four states hold similar views about a settlement and as long as they form a natural unity due to their close cultural, political, social and demographic ties, a confederation among them is a natural phenomenon that can bring benefits to all. Unless the Arabs take a practical and positive step now, warned the writer, they can watch Israel swallow up Arab territory piece by piece.

By The Associated Press

EUROPE draws together as the Soviet Union ceases to exist. Now that the cold war is over and governments no longer need to choose sides, the United Nations may be able to play its intended role of world arbiter.

War rages in Yugoslavia, or what remains of it, but the 12-year-old civil war in Cambodia has ended, maybe.

Afghanistan's domestic warfare may expire for lack of arms, and in El Salvador, both parties to a conflict that began 11 years ago talk of ending it.

South Africa tries to bury apartheid, but the funeral has been violent. Democracy is gaining a tenuous foothold in some other African countries.

Correspondents of the Associated Press were asked to assess the coming year. These are their reports:

United Nations

The end of the cold war and collapse of the Soviet Union have created new opportunities for the United Nations to become the centerpiece of a new world order.

Perhaps for the first time since its birth in 1945, the United Nations will have the chance to fulfill its mandate to remove the scourge of war, bring nations together and resolve or prevent regional conflicts.

For much of its history, it has been frustrated by cold war rivalries and confrontation between rich and poor nations.

Now those barriers have crumbled. The fading of blocs and ideologies, and a more pragmatic spirit worldwide, enable the 166-member organization to play a larger role, encouraged by both the United States and the Soviet Union. Russia is expected to take over the Soviet seat in the General Assembly.

As regional conflicts subside, issues of economic development, debt relief and cooperation between rich and poor are expected to share the spotlight with global questions—like the environment, drug trafficking and AIDS.

As 1991 ended, a newly assertive and successful United Nations elected its first Arab and African secretary-general, Boutros Ghali of Egypt. Mr. Ghali's predecessor, Javier Perez de Cuellar, ended his decade of tenure by negotiating the release of Western hostages in Lebanon and Arab prisoners in Israel and Lebanon.

The United Nations has played a major role in the Gulf, both before and after the war early in 1991. In keeping with an accord that ended 12 years of civil war in Cambodia, it will provide peacekeepers and help administer the country until supervised, free elections are held.

It began a Western Sahara peacekeeping operation aimed at ending 16 years of warfare and mediated talks between the Salvadoran government and rebels that are expected to end an 11-year civil war in that Central American country.

The world organization has exhibited new determination to involve itself in human rights and other issues that have been off-limits under the U.N. Charter, which prohibits interference in a nation's internal affairs.

In those areas, the United Nations can be only as effective as its members want. Trouble spots like Kashmir, an area disputed by India and Pakistan, continue to fester because the Security Council views them as internal matters.

Western Europe
Western Europe will abolish hundreds of trade barriers in 1992 to create a vast common market extending from the Arctic circle to the Mediterranean.

At the end of the year, after seven years of planning, the 12 European Community nations will establish a single market of 338 million people. Several other nations seek to join.

People, money, goods and services will be allowed to flow freely among the nations, much as commerce moves across state

borders in America.

Before the market opens formally, EC members will try to resolve differences on tax rates, border controls, financial services and other matters.

They also will prepare the ground for the European union agreement worked out Dec. 11, which will be signed in early February and submitted to national parliaments for ratification.

It rewrites the founding constitution of 1957, creating a loose federation with common foreign policy and single currency by the end of the century.

The European Currency Unit, or ECU, will replace the 11 currencies currently in use. There now are 11 rather than 12 currencies because Belgium and Luxembourg share one.

Also scheduled for 1992 are negotiations on a five-year budget for the community. Once that is settled, the EC has promised to open talks with other countries seeking to join the market.

Austria and Sweden are expected to be the first new members, and Turkey, Cyprus and Malta also have submitted applications. Switzerland and Finland are expected to apply, and

Czechoslovakia's attempt to settle relations between Czechs and Slovaks, to Bulgaria's effort to put officially sponsored terrorism behind it, to Albania's simple goal of surviving the winter.

Soviet Union

Winston Churchill called the Soviet Union "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Today, it might be described as a crisis cloaked in disarray within chaos.

Questions for 1992 range from the global to the mundane: will control of 27,000 nuclear warheads remain with Russian President Boris Yeltsin? Will the Soviet Union default on its billions of dollars in foreign debt? How bad will inflation become when Russia ends most price controls Jan. 1?

Fears of social unrest run high. Ethnic trouble gets worse as traditional political structures collapse.

The loss of the three Baltic republics and declarations of independence by Armenia, Moldova and Georgia disrupted the old economic interdependence, worsening productivity. Ukraine plans its own currency.

President Mikhail S. Gorbachev resigned on Dec. 25, and

with Israel, the Israelis to stop building Jewish settlements in occupied territory and trade captured land for peace.

Despite Syria's switch from the leader of Arab radicals to U.S. ally, many remain sceptical of its long-term commitment to moderation.

Isolated, embargoed and broke, President Saddam Hussein's Iraqi government hangs on. Most experts see President Saddam falling at some point. But they also see the chance of chaos in Iraq, and possibly the rest of the Gulf, if no successor is able to keep together a country divided between Sunni and Shiite Muslims and between Kurdish and Arab ethnic groups.

Africa

A few countries are struggling to escape the dictatorial rule that oppresses Africa, but some democratic parties face great resistance from authoritarian regimes intent on keeping power.

The election defeat of Kenneth Kaunda, who ruled Zambia for 27 years, was a major victory for the democratic movement. But in Togo, Uganda and elsewhere, reformers are struggling.

Western nations, vital sources of aid, are pushing for change. Strikes and campus shootouts undermine new-found democracy in Bangladesh and in Sri Lanka, the government remains in elusive quest of a political or a military solution to an 8-year-old insurrection by militants of the Tamil minority.

Asia

In 1992, the Asian spotlight will be on Cambodia, where the United Nations and Japan seek to help bring peace to a land ravaged by a generation of war.

Thousands of U.N. soldiers and civilian administrators are to supervise the disarmament of four Cambodia factions and prepare for national elections in 1993.

Japan is keen to build its political reputation by playing a major role in Cambodia, but it may not contribute troops because of domestic opposition. Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa could not win parliamentary approval of a bill allowing soldiers to participate in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

The legislation, which may be resurrected in 1992, would authorize the first dispatch of Japanese ground forces overseas since World War II. That prospect has stirred mixed feeling among pacifist Japanese and Asians victimised by Japanese aggression half a century ago.

Elsewhere in Asia, the world will try to persuade North Korea to allow inspection of its nuclear installations.

North Korea is one of the few remaining hard-line communist nations, and intelligence reports say it is developing nuclear weapons.

In December, the two Koreas signed a non-aggression pact and said they would work toward a nuclear-free peninsula.

In China, now the world's main communist nation, a unique combination of economic reform and political restraint is expected to continue. The mix breeds corruption and crime, which the government combats with periodic anti-crime campaigns and more ambitious ideological education.

The Chinese Communist Party plans its first congress in five years, but no major policy or personnel shifts are expected until the deaths of Deng Xiaoping and the other older leaders.

South Pacific

Severe recessions in Australia and New Zealand will be felt by all the Pacific island nations that depend economically on their two bigger neighbours.

Australia is suffering its worst recession in 50 years, unemployment of more than 10 per cent, a serious drought and a sharp decline in traditional exports of wool and wheat. New Zealand is in similar condition.

Political instability has worsened Australia's plight. In

December, a vote of the Labour Party parliamentary caucus deposed Prime Minister Bob Hawke in favour of his former treasury minister, Paul Keating.

The rivalry between Mr. Keating and Mr. Hawke, the prime minister since 1983, has split the party and country. Fols had indicated Mr. Hawke's government would be routed if elections were held now.

Political rivalry also is causing problems in Fiji.

Maj.-Gen. Sitiveni Rabuka, who led two coups in 1987, is feuding publicly with Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Mr. Rabuka recently resigned as army commander and seeks to become prime minister in the 1992 elections.

In Papua Guinea, the world's largest copper mine remains closed as separatists continue battling the army. More than 100 people have been killed in two years and 3,000 have died from lack of medical care.

In addition to economics, small island nations like Tuvalu worry about the "greenhouse effect" of global warming. They fear it will raise sea levels and swamp their atolls.

Canada

Canada's fate as a nation will be decided in 1992. The giant atop North America is tearing itself to pieces in a debate over Quebec.

The French-speaking province has struggled to protect its language and culture in a sea of English speakers. It wants its uniqueness enshrined in the constitution, and demands greater control over its own affairs.

Many English speakers feel Quebec should be treated no differently than any other province.

Separatist sentiment is at new highs in Quebec. Its legislature passed a law requiring a referendum on sovereignty no later than October if the rest of Canada does not make an acceptable constitutional proposal.

If the separatists win, Quebec's independence would be declared one year later and one Canada would become two less wealthy and influential countries.

Debate widened when native populations also demanded special treatment and other regions raised their own issues, like greater say in the economy.

The government issued a 28-point proposal that is being debated across the country. The final product will not be known until spring.

Many Canadians feel the constitutional debate has preoccupied the government to the detriment of such important matters as dealing with an economy in recession.

With unemployment at 10.3 per cent, bankruptcies at record levels and no evidence of sustained recovery in sight, Canadians are angry.

Much of the anger is aimed at Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who is Canada's least popular leader since polling began, with an approval rating of 12 per cent to 15 per cent.

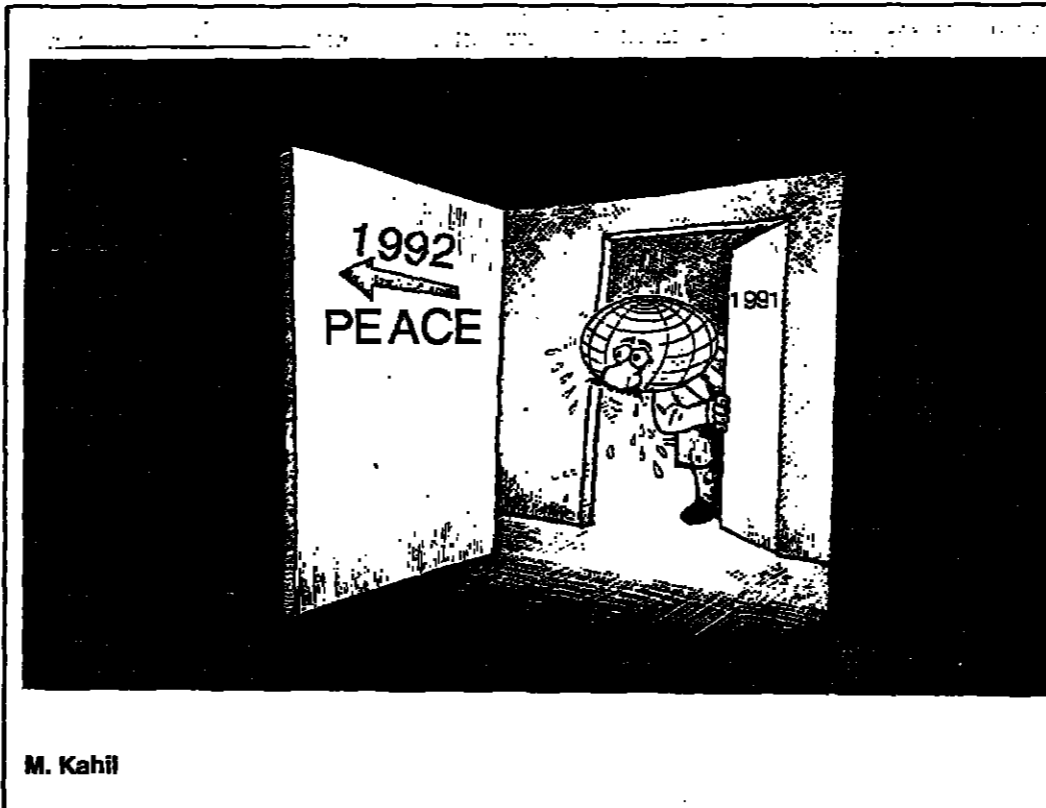
Mexico-Central America
Mexico and Central America expect more social and economic stability in 1992 than in recent times, although many of the problems that produced a decade of turmoil remain unsolved.

Negotiators for the government and guerrillas in El Salvador are at the final stages of an accord to end 12 years of civil war that claimed more than 75,000 lives.

With the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, deterioration of Cuba's economy and the election defeat of the leftist Sandinistas in Nicaragua, Central America has ceased to be a focus of world attention.

The issues now are to rebuild Nicaragua and El Salvador and contain a stubborn, sporadic insurrection in Guatemala.

Wide gaps between rich and poor persist and lawless elements opposed to social change remain active, which could plunge the region into chaos.



M. Kahil

possibly Norway.

Eastern Europe

The struggling nations of Eastern Europe look to new elections and economic reforms in 1992 as they adapt to democracy and the free market.

Yugoslavia, which stepped into an abyss in 1991, appears likely to continue its fall regardless of moves by the Slovenian and Croatian republics toward internationally recognised independence. The thousands of victims of its brutal fratricidal war seem unlikely to be the last.

Parliamentary or presidential elections are scheduled for 1992 in several countries. Unlike the first elections after the anti-communist revolution, they probably will reflect some of the frustration felt by people who are learning democracy does not guarantee prosperity.

Unemployment and prices are rising. Travel and communications make the Western life tangible, while remaining unattainable.

Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the most prosperous under communism and now farthest along the economic reform, hope to start large-scale privatisation of their economies in 1992.

Poland must determine whether despair over rising unemployment and the inability of state industry to compete in a free market will doom its bold plans. National challenges range from

the ruling Communist Party was destroyed after the failed coup by hard-liners in August.

At year's end, the Soviet Union has ceased to exist, with political power flowing to the republics, principally Russia and its president, Boris Yeltsin, under his newly created confederation of independent states. "He controls most Soviet institutions, including the nuclear button and much of the military."

Eleven of the 15 former Soviet republics, including the four holding nuclear weapons, joined the new commonwealth. Only separatist Georgia and the Baltics, which gained independence earlier in the year, were not included.

In mid-December, Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Gorbachev announced the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union would take place at midnight, Dec. 31.

Middle East

Peace talks between Israel and the Arabs are certain to bring one result in 1992: increasing tension between each side and the United States.

After establishing itself as the world's only superpower in the war with Iraq, the United States moved from unquestioning support for Israel to the delicate role of middleman.

President George Bush and Secretary of States James Baker will continue pressing both sides for concessions. They will urge the Arabs to make real peace

Kenya agreed to end one-party rule, but some opposition leaders contend the West is not doing enough to force change.

South Africa has reached a decisive moment as the white government and its opponents begin talks on ending apartheid. Extremist factions, black and white, oppose a settlement. Political violence has claimed thousands of lives.

Democracy will face a major test in Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation, as it attempts the transition from authoritarian rule.

The economies of many African nations continue to decay, ravaged by war, civil unrest and corruption.

In formerly Marxist countries, democratic reformers hope free enterprise can repair the damage done by decades of central control. Some observers fear it is too late.

Africa also is being swept by a plague of AIDS that could claim millions of lives by 2000. The continent has only 12 per cent of the world's population, but is estimated to have 60 per cent of the AIDS cases.

Asian subcontinent

The Asian subcontinent is struggling to break out of economic suffocation and put down disorders that range from murder in the streets to civil war.

Afghanistan's 13-year-old war between Islamic guerrillas and a Soviet-sponsored government

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Water harvesting has potential to change face of farming in West Asia and North Africa

By Ben Wedeman

THE scarcity of water is an inescapable reality of agriculture in much of West Asia and North Africa. Yet every year billions of cubic metres of water go unused, vanishing into thin air through evaporation, runoff and seepage. This situation may soon change, thanks to interesting new research scientists are conducting in the area. Scientists and agricultural engineers are developing innovative techniques which maximise use of limited rainfall to produce impressive crops of cereals, fruit and forage. These techniques are based upon "water harvesting," which essentially involves collecting rainfall from a large area and using it to cultivate crops in a smaller area.

For thousands of years many farmers in the Middle East depended upon a wide range of water harvesting methods. One of the oldest and most fascinating is the ancient system of "qanats," dating back to the fifth century B.C. Qanats—manmade underground channels extending from the side of a hill or mountain to a cultivated area—convey runoff water by gravity from steep, uncultivable areas to be used downstream. At occasional intervals along the qanat wells are dug to bring the water to the surface. These channels can be as much as 40 kilometres long, totalling at one time more than 160,000 kilometres in Iran alone.

The advantages of this system are many. The qanats, being dug so deep, reduce evaporation, unlike conventional open channels. There are however disadvantages to the qanat system. Qanats are costly to construct, require constant maintenance, and call for a high level of social organisation and cooperation. In addition, qanat construction is a very dangerous affair, with workers dying in frequent cave-ins or from lack of oxygen.

The qanat system began to decline shortly after the introduction of mechanical pumps around the middle of the century. Well-to-do farmers, who before were

the principal investors in qanat construction and maintenance, bought pumps and stopped using the system. Lacking the support of the prosperous farmers, the poorer farmers were unable to maintain the system. Despite this, even today some towns in Iran depend upon qanats for their water supply. In the early 1970s 20,000 qanats were reportedly still in use.

A similar system providing water to a large area west of the Nile was in operation in Egypt around 500 B.C. Qanats have been found in Central and South America, North Africa, and as far away as the Gobi Desert, where one qanat was dug to an awesome depth of 1,500 metres.

The traditional methods of water harvesting may provide the theoretical basis for the development of efficient, highly productive and sustainable farming systems in areas once thought to have little productive capacity. An excellent example of the potential of such systems is the EC-funded University of Jordan water harvesting research project near Muwaqar, about 30 kilometres southeast of Amman, Jordan.

The Muwaqar project covers a 200-hectare site with three reservoirs catching run-off water in the wadis. While annual rainfall in the area is low—about 150 millimetres per year—the water collected in the reservoirs is used to irrigate cereals, fruit trees and forage crops. The three reservoirs, with a total capacity of around 85,000 cubic metres, were formed behind small dams. These dams were designed with local materials and resource in mind. According to water harvesting specialist Theil Oweis, who recently left the University of Jordan to join the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a 30,000 cubic metre dam cost between JD 1,500 and JD 2,000 (\$2,160-2,880), a reasonable sum if pooled by a group of farmers and possibly with some govern-

ment help.

Even in years of low rainfall it takes only a few days of rain for the dams to fill up to the top. Rainfall at Muwaqar during the 1990-91 season was lower than average—around 70 millimetres. Despite this, water was available for irrigation by November 1990 and even in late June 1991; despite the intense summer heat, all three reservoirs were still full. In fact, it takes very little rain to fill them up—as little as 5 millimetres, according to Jordan University's Esmat Karadshah, who has been working in the Muwaqar project. Mr. Karadshah says that fruit and olive trees are most appropriate form of agriculture in the area. Research continues to determine the optimal use of this precious water.

The Muwaqar project uses the water harvesting concept on a small as well as a large scale. In one experiment, plots ranging between 25 and 75 square metres are either covered with plastic sheeting or the soil is compacted and molded at an angle toward a fruit tree in an uncovered corner. When rain falls, the water that would fall in these relatively larger plots is channelled into smaller areas around fruit or olive trees. Another experiment involves cultivating fruit trees in simple trenches designed to catch runoff.

Dr. Oweis notes that the quality of the water at Muwaqar is surprisingly good, with an electrical conductivity (a measure of total salts in the water) level of 0.3. This compares quite favourably with the drinking water in Amman, which is between 0.5 and 0.6. The only drawback is the high level of sediment in the runoff water, which is always muddy. The sediment can clog sprinklers and drip irrigation systems, but efficient filters can alleviate this problem.

ICARDA is currently working on the development of water harvesting technology with scientists from the Arid Zone Research Institute (AZRI) in Baluchistan, Pakistan. Baluchis-

tan is one of the driest areas of the country, with extensive tracts of "khuskhaba," or dry lands. Where possible Baluchistani farmers have traditionally diverted streams and built bunds, or small embankments, as means of water collection. These practices are largely restricted to areas adjacent to such sources.

With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), since 1985 ICARDA and AZRI scientists have been studying the benefits of creating catchment areas at the top of gently sloping fields. The ratio of catchment areas to cropped area ranges from 1:1 to 2:1. The scientists hope that through natural seepage the water in these catchments will provide a steady source of moisture for crops cultivated at the lower ends. Results to date have been very encouraging. Because a smaller area was cultivated, albeit more intensively, production costs were significantly reduced. The plots irrigated by catchment water were smaller, required less seed and labour, but produced more. In every trial, overall production costs were cut by between 21 and 34 per cent, and yields per hectare often doubled.

ICARDA has also conducted water harvesting research along the arid western coast of Egypt around the town of Mersa Matruih, where annual rainfall is about 140 millimetres. ICARDA scientists believe that Roman engineers once devised advanced water harvesting technologies for this area, making it the so-called "bread basket" of the empire. Today the land barely supports a population of 100,000, and suffers from the all-too-frequent effects of overgrazing: bare and powdery soil highly vulnerable to wind and water erosion.

During an extensive evaluation of rainfed zones around Mersa Matruih researchers from ICARDA and the Egyptian Soil and Water Research Institute found that various means of water harvesting are still used in this area. Along the coastal strip, which extends about 10 kilometres in-

land, farmers and nomads draw water from naturally occurring subterranean passageways. The water from this source is mostly used for livestock and the cultivation of fruit trees. Further inland, in the so-called barley strip, many bedouins have built cisterns and dikes to store runoff waters. Dikes in wadis are becoming increasingly common, and the water is being used to irrigate fruit trees. Further inland still is the rangeland, where annual rainfall rarely exceeds a scant 50 millimetres (mm).

The beauty of water harvesting is its simplicity. As Dr. Oweis says: "On land receiving 150 mm of rainfall, hardly any crop can be produced. But if half the land is used to water the other half, then you double the water in one half to 300 mm—enough for barley or maybe wheat. If you take water from two-thirds of the land and use it for the other third you can get 450 mm." The range of water harvesting systems available, both modern and conventional, promises to significantly increase agricultural productivity in many areas, and to make farming possible where it was previously believed to be impossible.

Vast areas of North Africa and West Asia receive less than 200 mm of rainfall per year, and thus are either completely unproductive or are being used to support livestock. Says ICARDA's Dr. Oweis: "without water harvesting, no benefit is received from these rains. But if you develop only one-fourth of these lands, you have the potential of changing the face of agriculture in the region."

Given the region's unprecedented population growth, and the consequent increase in the demand for food, there is a pressing need to increase agricultural production. The water harvesting research ICARDA, Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan and others are conducting may hold one part of the solution to a problem which will become more and more pressing over the coming years. — ICARDA News Feature.

Challenges to the U.S. from Germany and Japan

By Michael Getler

LUMPING Japan and Germany together in the same sentence, let alone an article about future challenges to America, is risky. Both countries remain important allies. Both are democracies, their futures intertwined with the United States.

Yet 50 years after America's entry into World War II, Japan and Germany loom once again as principal challenges to this country's future sense of well-being. To be sure, it is not a military challenge. Nor is it co-ordinated—indeed, the former Axis allies now see each other as economic rivals. Rather, the issue is how these two extraordinarily successful economic powers will use their strength and influence in the future, when they are likely to be even more clearly on top.

Will they use their growing power in an enlightened way, or will they fall into old patterns? Will they have the political leadership to avoid the kind of miscalculation about the United States that led both into trouble before?

More particularly, will these two nations stand for more than the worthy goals of peace and prosperity at home? Will they respond passively to aggression elsewhere, as they did immediately after the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait? Will they practise a form of appeasement politics in the belief that they can buy their way out of almost any foreign crisis?

For the time being, Germany, especially, is preoccupied with its own problems—rebuilding the eastern part of its newly unified nation and helping its neighbours in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Many Germans are worried, in fact, that the burdens of the east could bring instability to Germany itself.

Yet the billions of German marks flowing east are likely to pay off in an even more powerful, dominant, and probably more assertive Germany, in the view of some experienced U.S. and British diplomats.

Japan, at the same time, continues to expand as a truly new kind of economic and technology-driven superpower whose efficiency and drive to dominate markets is clearer than its ultimate intentions or ability to control the problems that untrained expansion can cause.

How the United States performs is crucial to this three-nation equation. Will it find the ways to compete better and maintain the mutual dependence that has helped all three nations prosper? Or will it continue a relative economic decline that saps its strength, feeds the sense of ascendancy in Tokyo and Berlin, and

makes the rest of the world nervous?

Such questions could loom very large in a world in which a relatively weaker United States is the sole military superpower, and in which its most important allies are Japan and Germany. And if they cannot be answered now, one can find clues to the future.

During a trip last month to both countries, a visitor found Germans and Japanese generally positive about their future performance. But in both countries there were also signs of uncertainty—even alarm—about themselves and also about the United States.

A deep strain of pacifism in Germany and Japan may comfort those who worry about future military ambitions, but it also masks more worrisome trends, such as anti-Americanism. In Germany, in particular, there appears to be a hard-to-measure but significant strain of anti-Americanism that goes beyond what one encounters in Japan.

"Anti-Americanism is very strong, and not only on the left. It's stylish because the U.S. is everything we hate to be and know we are," says Michael Stuermer, director of the Research Institute for International Affairs in Munich. "There is also a strong tendency to underestimate America," he says, "and it worries me very much."

German pacifism, genuinely deep-rooted for many because of the disaster of World War I and II, is opportunistic for some. It can contribute to their staying on the sidelines when the chips are down and is itself another form of anti-Americanism. While the U.S.-led war in the Gulf brought out hundreds of thousands of German protesters, Mr. Stuermer asks, "Where were the (Germans) when the people of Kuwait were being butchered?"

"There is no mass peace movement in Germany against what is happening in Yugoslavia," adds German novelist Peter Schneider, "because the United States is not involved." And, he adds, there is no solution to the fighting there because America is not involved.

"There is a deep-rooted, double track anti-Americanism here," says Michael Wolfsohn, a historian and professor at the German Bundeswehr, or army, university. "One is found on the political left, who see the U.S. as the political devil in the world. But the more dangerous one is conservative, or centre-based, which is a cultural anti-Americanism, a feeling that they (the Germans) know better than the McDonald's, the chewing gum, the 'Dallas' TV-series Amer-

icans." In both Germany and Japan there is also more substantive criticism about America's political, economic, and social health. Singled out are the U.S. debt trade, and budget deficits; its lack of savings and long-term research and development; the emphasis on short-term profits; and problems with crime, poverty and education.

Officials in both countries speak of a new phenomenon in Europe and, by implication, in America, of large numbers of people losing the ways and means to live and make a living, in such a world, as Hisashi Owada, Japan's vice minister for foreign affairs puts it, "the power to control social cohesion in domestic society is becoming even more important than physical power."

Officials in both countries also believe that U.S. companies are rapidly losing out in the investment race in eastern Europe and eastern Asia.

In Japan (much more dependent than Germany upon the American market and U.S. military and political strength), this theme of decline seems more prominent. While they fault Americans for blaming Japan rather than facing up to inadequacies in U.S. competitiveness, they seem truly anxious for the United States to do better.

Unlike Germany (where the theme of U.S. decline feeds Berlin's intentions to beef up European Community integration and Germany itself), Japan remains with basically one important friend: the United States. "No other powers are welcome. It is only the United States any place in Asia, except maybe India. Only the United States can play the role of honest broker" in this region, says Seizaburo Sato of Tokyo's International Institute for Global Peace. "No one can take its place."

"We are pretty worried about the weakness of the American economy and politics," says Naohiro Amaya, a former to official of Japan's powerful Ministry of International Trade and Industry. "Savings are too small. Spending is too much. The trade and budget deficits must stop. If you don't, the American economy will collapse... America is responsible for global stability and the economy. The collapse of America will mean the collapse of the world."

Japanese and Germans also believe the United States needs more of a directed economy which governments are more supportive of industry in select high-tech and high-pay-off fields, and industry is more committed to long-term investment. — Washington Post.

Budget

(Continued from page 1)

exceeded three per cent compared to one per cent in 1991, which in real terms is JD1,989 million for 1992 against JD1,931 million in 1991. The committee expressed hope that more exports of the mining industry and farming will find their way to new markets and exports to neighbouring countries will increase.

The committee voiced appreciation of the government efforts resulting in reducing expenditure by JD5 million and increasing revenue by JD24 million in 1991 which led to a reduction in the margin of deficit by 27 per cent.

The committee requested the government to keep up its efforts to further suppress expenditure and increase revenues.

The committee noted that national exports in 1991 shrank to \$1,038 million due to a fall in phosphate exports and the closure of certain markets because of the Gulf crisis. It also noted that imports also shrank to JD2,300 million, with the result that the deficit in the balance of trade amounted to JD1,262 million during 1991, compared to \$1,668 million in 1990.

In 1992, the committee said national exports are expected to reach \$1,225 million where as imports might reach \$3,434 million resulting in a balance of trade deficit of \$1,209 million.

The committee noted that Jordan's total debts stood at \$6,875 million at the end of 1991 compared to \$6,666 million at the end of 1990. The Kingdom's foreign debts have exceeded secure limits for many years now and the government has found it essential to reschedule payments in order to reduce the burden on the national economy, the committee noted.

Rescheduling means additional interest to be accumulated on the principle amounts, as was clear in the draft budget statement, the committee said.

The committee pointed out that the rescheduling of debts meant the payment of \$1,300 million in 1991, which also covered interests but that nothing has been paid.

The committee noted that even

after rescheduling the debts for 1991 through 1993, the Kingdom is in no better position.

The minister of finance had expressed his view that the government ought to convert high-interest external debts to easy-term loans at low interest rates to deal with the situation.

The committee noted that the draft budget envisaged the creation of 6,300 jobs in public administration which could rise to 11,000 jobs after some government employees retired during the coming year. But the committee noted, such additions to an already inflated public administration service was not beneficial unless measures have been taken to raise the efficiency of the employees and increase output. The committee suggested the creation of a national data bank providing information to the Ministry of Labour helping it to control the labour market. The committee also recommended that the government reactivate the Development and Employment Fund (DEF). The committee noted that a JD10 raise in the salary of the civil servants in the coming year was symbolic but could not mean make real improvement to their income in view of the soaring prices and the decline in the purchasing power of the Jordanian dinar.

The committee praised the government's efforts to direct subsidies for the most needy groups and for continuing to subsidise the prices of basic commodities. It recommended the government for reducing the subsidy by 50 per cent in 1991 compared with that of 1990 by steering the subsidies towards those most in need. But the committee cast doubt over the government's ability to limit the subsidies for 1992 to JD40 million in view of the increase in the volume of the needy groups and the return to Jordan of hundreds of thousands of expatriates.

The committee noted that the new budget included an allocation of JD8 million for the National Aid Fund (NAF) and said that the poverty line means a JD60 monthly income for a family and that a large sector now lives under this line. The committee recommended that the government conduct a survey aimed at determining those who actually are in need prior to introducing a new salary scale, determine the real poverty line.

Jordan welcomes Bulgarian offer

(Continued from page 1)

to host these talks." Of increased emigration from the Eastern bloc to Israel, Mr. Ganey refused to condemn the movement by saying that a condemnation of such emigration would be contrary to a policy in respect of human rights. "If we want to respect human rights we cannot forbid people from the right to travel," Mr. Ganey said.

He said that he hoped the emigration would not create an imbalance in the Middle East.

Bulgaria, Mr. Ganey said, wants to secure its independence and hoped that events occurring in the countries surrounding would not affect it. "We have

asked for international security guards to patrol the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian border," Mr. Ganey said.

Bulgaria, he said, wishes to give assurances that it wants to have no part in the conflict and hoped for international assurances that its neutrality would be respected.

The elections held on Oct. 13 ushered in a democratic era in Bulgaria. The democratic forces proved to be stronger than the old communist system. The Muslim minority are given full rights and Turkey, a country that had previously criticised Bulgaria's treatment of its Muslim minority, has praised it for its new policy of cultural and religious tolerance.

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Financial Markets

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	20/12/91	27/12/91	Percent Change
Sterling Pound	1.8580	1.8742	0.87
Deutsche Mark	1.5359	1.5188	1.12
Swiss Franc	1.5642	1.5518	0.92
French Franc	5.2495	5.1905	1.13
Japanese Yen	127.53	125.90	1.29

Euro-Currency Interest Rates

Currency	1-Month (%)	3-Month (%)	6-Month (%)	1-Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	4.62	4.12	4.56	4.31
Sterling Pound	11.00	10.5e	10.81	10.81
Deutsche Mark	9.75	9.43	9.81	9.43
Swiss Franc	8.50	8.12	8.25	7.67
French Franc	10.12	9.93	10.51	10.09
Japanese Yen	6.12	5.43	6.15	5.40

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.674	0.676
Sterling Pound	1.2627	1.2690
Deutsche Mark	0.4435	0.4457
Swiss Franc	0.4963	0.5008
French Franc	0.1296	0.1304
Japanese Yen	0.5347	0.5374
Dutch Guilder	0.3932	0.3952
Swedish Krona	0.1213	0.1219
Italian Lira	0.0564	0.0567
Belgian Franc	0.02150	0.02161

Japan plans to boost foreign aid budget 7.8 per cent in '92

TOKYO (R) — Japan, already the world's largest foreign aid donor, plans to boost its official development assistance (ODA) budget by 7.8 per cent in fiscal 1992, Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe said.

After winding up negotiations with the finance ministry, Mr. Watanabe said the government's ODA or foreign aid budget would total 952 billion yen (\$7.6 billion) for the 1992 fiscal year beginning April 1.

The budget increase — 69 billion yen (\$548 million) or 7.8 per cent over the current fiscal year — was "exceptionally sharp" at a time of fiscal cutbacks, Mr. Watanabe said at a news conference.

"I think it is a very good budget plan if one considers Japan's present difficult financial situation," he said.

Japan's 1992 fiscal budget, according to a final draft approved by the cabinet Saturday, totals some 72.2 trillion yen (\$573 billion), up some three per cent over this year's budget. The ODA hike is one of the largest in the draft budget.

Mr. Watanabe said the increase in spending on foreign aid indicated that Japan intended to step up its international contributions in line with its status as an economic superpower.

Japan had pledged to double its ODA to \$50 billion over a period of five years to 1992.

"With the new budget, I think Japan can achieve the target, as long as the foreign exchange rate remains at the present level," Mr. Watanabe said.

The defence budget for the next fiscal year will increase 3.8 per cent from the current year, the lowest growth rate in 32 years, defence ministry officials said.

The 4.55 trillion yen (\$36.15 billion) defence outlay focuses on improving the living conditions of Japan's 240,000 men armed forces rather than buying more frontline equipment, officials of the ministry's section said.

They attributed the lowest growth rate since 1960, when it grew by only 0.6 per cent, more to the slowing Japanese economy than to relaxed military tensions in the post-cold war era.

"We originally demanded a 5.38 per cent growth but it was cut back to 3.8 per cent," one budget official told a briefing after the final budget session between Defence Minister Sohei Miyashita and Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata.

"The final growth figure was slashed because of the slow growth in tax revenue and the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble," the official said.

"It's the bottom line to meet the goals of the five year (1991-1995) defence build-up programme."

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa had called for reduced growth in the military budget next year because of the break-up of the Soviet Union and other post-cold war threats. He has also said he may review the five-year programme.

Cairo succeeds in reforming economy without provoking unrest

Egypt describes ambitious plan for capital markets

CAIRO (R) — The central bank is spelling out its ambitions to develop a vigorous capital market in Egypt which would make the country a financial centre for the Middle East.

The bank's report to parliament for the financial year to June 30, obtained by Reuters, also urges a specific list of stringent measures to cut the government's budget deficit and control its foreign debt.

The report said Egypt's programme of economic reform "includes developing the capital market in Egypt and gradually making it a regional and international market with a significant position."

It added that the central bank had worked out with the World Bank the framework of an action plan to carry this out. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are closely involved in Egypt's reform programme and an IMF official has an office across the hall from the central bank governor.

Egypt took the first steps towards establishing a capital market earlier this year by freeing interest rates and exchange rates and starting to issue short-term treasury bills to fund the government's budget deficit.

A capital market enables banks, businesses and the government to deposit and borrow large sums of money easily at competitive rates of interest.

The central bank report listed four priorities to develop the market:

— Developing procedures and technical systems to ensure rapid

dissemination of information in the market.

— Allowing new intermediaries such as investment funds and money brokers to be set up, to encourage development of both primary and secondary markets.

— Developing brokerage regulations to international standards.

— Standardising the tax treatment of different instruments.

The report confirmed the central bank's intention to issue treasury paper with maturities other than the three and six months now available. Bankers expect one-and perhaps two-year bonds.

Treasury bills have proved extremely popular with private investors since they were launched in January but the system is still rudimentary. A Western economist close to the central bank said hundreds of people queued at the bank's head office in central Cairo whenever bills were auctioned.

The central bank listed several specific measures it wanted the government to take to cut its budget deficit, vital if inflation is to be brought down, and control Egypt's foreign debt.

It said the government should continue to remove subsidies, simplify the tax system and cut the number of exemptions, and redistribute civil servants to make them more productive. Restrictions on imports should be lifted and customs duties simplified as part of measures to liberalise trade.

The bank also called for the

government to appoint one central body to manage Egypt's foreign debt, estimated by the World Bank to total just under \$40 billion in mid-1991 despite \$14 billion cancelled by Gulf countries and the United States in return for Egyptian support in the Gulf war.

About \$10 billion is due to be written off and another \$10 billion rescheduled because Egypt has agreed economic reforms with the World Bank and IMF.

The bank did not say who the central body should be, although the bank itself could presumably expect to be a candidate if the government agreed with the suggestion.

Egypt is hurting its poor to save its economy, but the government has so far avoided the violent street protests which killed an earlier attempt at reform.

Economists hesitate to claim they know the secret of the government's formula.

But they say price rises have been introduced subtly and families are finding ways of coping, ranging from changes in diet to an increase in petty corruption.

"Overall, I would say the government should score a good record," said Hazem El Beblawi, chairman of the Export Development Bank of Egypt. "Most of the painful measures have been introduced almost without the social and political disruption that many people were afraid they might cause."

Fuad Amir Mohammad El Shanawi, in a shanty in the poor Cairo district of Assayida Zaynab, summed up more bluntly: "You eat meat. I don't. You eat chicken. I don't."

Fuad, a petty criminal who has spent his adult life in and out of jail, and his brother-in-law Aladdin Mohammed Saad survive because Aladdin is hired most days to do an hour and a half shift driving a minibus for four Egyptian pounds (\$1.20).

That keeps them, Fuad's two sisters and five children on a diet of rice, potatoes and onions. The only school-age child does not go to the government school because they cannot afford the minimal fees.

Every part of the reform programme begun in March 1990 has hit the poor in the teeming, grimy tenements of Egypt's cities harder than the rich.

The government has raised the prices of flour, rice, pasta, electricity, heating oil, cooking gas and petrol and increased fares on railways and buses. Bottled butane gas, for example, went up by 130 per cent in May 1990 and another 66 per cent in May this year.

The government also introduced a 10 per cent sales tax on most goods and services in May. Raised customs duties 30 per cent, and freed interest rates so that they rose sharply.

The aim of the reforms is to cut hugely expensive subsidies and control a government budget deficit which equalled 15 to 16 per

cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the financial year to the end of June 1991.

But the immediate result is to subject a mass of people already hovering near the bread line to continual price rises on almost everything they need to buy. Inflation in cities and towns hit an annual rate of 25.9 per cent in October, according to official statistics.

When the government announced a list of sharp price rises for basic commodities in January 1977, Egypt's cities erupted in protest riots in which dozens of people were killed. The late president Anwar Sadat was forced to cancel the increases.

Not this time.

"The method of raising prices is much more sophisticated now," commented a leading Egyptian economist, who preferred not to be named. "The government has learned a lesson from 1977... they never announce a price rise."

"Sometimes they raise prices in an underhand way," he explained. "The standard way is to say that they will provide an improved variety of a product."

So bread prices were raised by introducing a new type of loaf which cost more, then gradually phasing out the old type. Foodstuffs once sold loose from a sack, such as rice or sugar, became easily available only in a more expensive packaged form.

He said poorly-paid government employees eked out their salaries by driving taxis or taking petty bribes.

An economist at a Western

embassy said people on low incomes had been forced to eat less protein and more starch.

He said the government had prepared people much more effectively for the latest reforms than it did in 1977, when the price rises were announced suddenly.

"The government did go out of its way in a number of statements and press articles and speeches... to talk about the harsh realities of life and people were, I think, prepared this time," he said.

The message has certainly penetrated the narrow, muddy streets of Assayida Zaynab.

Fatma, a widow with seven children, lives comfortably on her husband's army pension. They eat fish almost every day and meat every Friday.

"Everyone is doing what they can," she said, beaming. "Prices are going up in the whole world, not just in Egypt."

Nevertheless, Egypt's reforms are only just beginning.

The measures taken so far to reduce the budget deficit and free interest rates and the exchange rate are to be followed by a radical overhaul of the public sector, which at present accounts for more than half of GDP.

That could mean a big increase in unemployment in an overcrowded country where the population of 56 million is increasing by a million every nine months.

The Western economist cautioned: "It doesn't necessarily mean that there is not some point at which, if you push, you will not get some disturbance."

Survey looks into pay rises in Britain

LONDON (R) — British managers are getting pay rises that are much higher than the rate of inflation this year despite recession and rising unemployment, according to a survey.

But the annual survey showed that salary increases for managing directors had slowed to an average of 9.1 per cent in the first half of 1991 from 11 per cent the previous year.

Other managers received an average 10 per cent pay increase at a time when inflation was running at about six per cent.

"We are seeing for the first time managing directors receiving lower increases than the rest of their staff," Director Michael Smith told a news conference.

The survey said more board members than other managers took no increase during the year and the number of managers getting pay rises of 20 per cent or more fell by more than half.

Turks urged to eat more nuts

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey, the world's biggest hazelnut grower, is urging its people to eat more nuts to absorb its abundant harvest and drive up export earnings.

Official figures show only about 30,000 tonnes of processed hazelnuts, about one tenth of the harvest, was consumed in Turkey last year, with the rest flooding European markets.

The average Turk eats about 500 grammes of nuts a year, compared to 725 grammes a head consumed by Europeans.

Banks in Bahrain to cut prime rates

MANAMA, Bahrain (R) — Standard Chartered Bank of Bahrain said Sunday it would cut its prime lending rate by half a percentage point to eight per cent on Jan. 2.

Chief executive Ross Holden told Reuters the cut followed a request from Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA) to banks to review domestic rates to stimulate Bahrain's economy.

Mr. Holden said interest rate reductions had been made possible following the downward trend in U.S. dollar interest rates.

"On Friday, the U.S. Federal Reserve lowered the key discount rate by one percentage point to 3.5 per cent."

The BMA sent a circular to 19 commercial banks operating on the island to review rates.

There is no fixed prime lending rate in Bahrain.

National Bank of Bahrain, the biggest domestic bank in terms of assets, was the first to announce it was cutting its prime lending rate by half a percentage point to eight per cent on Jan. 2.

Assistant general manager of bank of Bahrain and Kuwait Peter Stevenson said the bank would cut its prime rate to 7.75 per cent from 8.5 per cent on Jan. 1.

Mr. Stevenson said his bank would cut the consumers' loan rate to 11.75 per cent from 13 per cent on Jan. 2.

U.S. airlines to hike fares

NEW YORK (AP) — Some of the biggest U.S. airlines have confirmed that they are raising most domestic fares by two per cent as of Jan. 3, the second round of price hikes within a month.

Last week, the airlines said they were raising their bargain advance-purchase fares, which require Saturday-night stayovers, by \$20 per roundtrip. The increases are part of a strategy to stem the multibillion dollar losses they suffered due to the Gulf war and the recession. The slowdown forced many carriers to cut fares to stimulate travel.

"As you're well aware, the economy hasn't been kind to the airlines," said Jim Faulkner, spokesman for Northwest Airlines in Minneapolis. "All of us are looking at ways to make sure our prices reflect our true costs."

United Airlines initiated the latest fare hike, which the carrier disclosed Monday by inserting

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Fighting shatters Georgia truce

MOSCOW (R) — Fresh fighting erupted in the Georgian capital Tbilisi Sunday after beleaguered President Zviad Gamsakhurdia again refused to resign, Radio Moscow said.

The new wave of violence shattered a ceasefire agreed Saturday evening between leaders of rebel and loyalist armed groups in the trans-Caucasian republic.

The groups united to demand the resignation of Mr. Gamsakhurdia, hiding in the basement of the parliament building, but Radio Moscow said he had refused the new demand.

"The fighting resumed after Zviad Gamsakhurdia rejected the demand of the opposition to resign," it said.

Rebel National Guards have been bombarding the parliament since last Sunday in a bid to oust

"Mr. Gamsakhurdia, who they accuse of trying to impose a dictatorship since winning presidential elections in May."

Health Ministry officials Saturday said at least 51 people had been killed and 283 wounded so far.

Moscow Radio said armed opposition units had occupied part of the parliament and government complex where Mr. Gamsakhurdia and his supporters were sheltering.

"The government house and nearby buildings are on fire," it said. Many buildings along the central Rustaveli Avenue have been burnt out.

Military and political figures, some formerly loyal to Mr. Gamsakhurdia, met Saturday night and issued a communique insisting the president hand over his

power to the republic's parliament. They also called for new elections.

"The armed opposition considers it its duty to declare that President Gamsakhurdia, who has been unable to preserve national agreement, peace and defence of human rights in Georgia, must submit his resignation," the statement said.

The local Iprinda News Agency said a statement by the armed groups, saying all Mr. Gamsakhurdia's powers had been transferred to the parliament, was read out on Georgian television in the early hours of Sunday morning.

This report, issued by the agency's Moscow bureau, could not be confirmed. All telephone lines to Georgia have been cut.

Mr. Gamsakhurdia told reporters before the communique was issued that the armed groups wanted "power without elections."

He added: "They have created some kind of junta and this military junta wants to have power in Georgia."

He said he was prepared to compromise on other matters but would not give up the post of president.

Those who signed the communique included Deputy Defence Ministry Besik Kutateladze, once a Gamsakhurdia supporter.

"I support the resignation of Gamsakhurdia. He has no moral right to be president," Mr. Kutateladze told reporters after the talks. "But I do not think he will resign... It is quite possible there will be a prolonged war."

Yeltsin: Russia will have 30,000-man guard

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin promised Sunday to revive a Russian national army with at least 30,000 men, possibly throwing a wrench into Monday's talks on a joint military for the new commonwealth.

Mr. Yeltsin also met with Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian in Moscow and promised that the Commonwealth of Independent States would discuss the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where fighting in a disputed territory reportedly has killed as many as 25 people since Friday.

Meanwhile Sunday, voters in the Central Asian Republic of Uzbekistan went to the polls to pick a new president and approve the parliament's independence declaration on Aug. 31.

More than 80 per cent turned out by midnight in the predominantly Muslim state of 20 million. TASS reported. Current parliament chief Islam Karimov was running against nationalist poet Muhammad Solikh.

Mr. Yeltsin, in his most specific statement yet on a separate Russian defence force, told Russian journalists Sunday that the vast federalism will join other republics in creating separate armies under the umbrella of a unified military. The TASS news agency said.

"Russia will also have its own National Guard of about 30,000-40,000 men. We will revive the old Russian traditions up to the level of the guardsmen and his uniform," he said, according to TASS. He gave no other details.

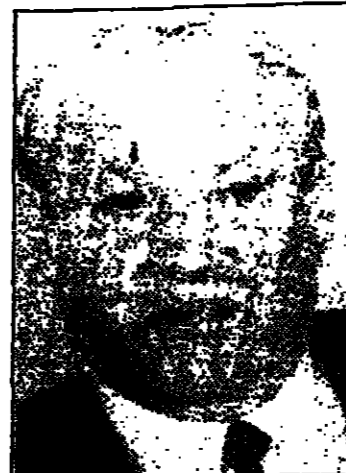
Russian officials in the past have been non-committal about their plans to create a separate defence force, choosing instead to push for a unified military on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

However, preliminary agreements reached in Moscow Friday by the defence ministers indicated that Ukrainian, Moldovan and Azerbaijan plans to form their own armies were still a major obstacle in the talks.

The defence chiefs will meet formally starting Monday in the Byelorussian capital of Minsk, the administrative centre of the commonwealth.

Ukraine in particular has been undaunted in creation of a separate army of several thousand men. President Leonid Kravchuk has declared control over all Soviet troops and weapons in Ukraine except long-range nuclear missiles. He said Saturday that Ukraine intends also to be a sea power.

Even while announcing the Russian guard, Mr. Yeltsin said



Boris Yeltsin

commonwealth members must agree on a unified military. The West, led by the United States, has insisted the former republics establish a secure, central command over the old Soviet arsenal if they want aid and diplomatic recognition.

"We should agree on a unified armed forces, about their structures and coordination, and about unified command over the strategic nuclear weapons," TASS reported Mr. Yeltsin said.

"We also should agree on what will happen to the ground troops in independent states. Most of their leaders stand for unified command over the armed force of commonwealth countries," Mr. Yeltsin said.

The Russian leader said the commonwealth would be guided by councils of member states' leaders, but affirmed that neither the commonwealth nor Russia would dominate over the other members.

"We are equals among equals," Mr. Yeltsin said.

Differences on economic, defence and foreign policy have troubled the new commonwealth in the week following its proclamation and four days after Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as Soviet president.

Documents signed Friday by its defence ministers provided for a joint rather than a unified command as hoped for by Mr. Yeltsin and Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, the interim head of commonwealth forces.

Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova had insisted Friday on forming their own armies, forcing modifications in Marshal Shaposhnikov's concept.

Marshal Shaposhnikov said those members entering the joint command will share military financing, but those that don't must pay for their own armed forces.

Bush risks political danger on Asia trip

WASHINGTON (R) — President George Bush, striving to halt a slide in popularity brought on by a slumping economy, sets off Monday on a marathon 12-day tour of Asia and Australia which is fraught with political danger.

Mr. Bush, how faces voters in November, portrays the trip, during which he will cover 26,000 miles (42,000 kms), as a trade mission to create more U.S. jobs by opening markets for American exports.

To underscore that point, he is taking along 21 business executives, including the heads of the top three carmakers — General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

He arrives in Sydney, Australia, Tuesday and after stops in Canberra and Melbourne goes on to Singapore Friday for a two-day stay.

Mr. Bush travels to South Korea Sunday, Jan. 5, and arrives in Japan — the most critical stop on his itinerary — Tuesday, Jan. 7.

He returns to the United States on Jan. 10.

"Let there be no mistake. My number one priority is jobs and economic growth, and I am confident that we will succeed," Mr. Bush said in a Christmas message that touched on the ambitious tour.

His problem is that the trip coincides with the start of the presidential primary campaign and rising pressure for more action to end the recession.

The Republican president made it more politically sensitive by postponing it in November after a strongly-favoured Republican race amid Democratic charges that Mr. Bush would rather travel abroad than tackle domestic woes.

He has since raised expectations of a pay-off from the trip which could haunt him in the election campaign and poison the atmosphere between Washington and Tokyo.

Unless he comes home with tangible results which will clearly help spur an economic turnaround, he will open himself to attack from Republican primary challenger Patrick Buchanan and the six Democrats vying to challenge him in November.

Mr. Bush has already warned Japan about rising protectionism in the United States. He wrote in a pre-vist letter to Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa that he opposed restrictions on Japanese imports, but added: "I need your help."

"I think they'll understand when this trip is over to the degree there are barriers that make this trade less than fair, that they better do something about it," he told a news conference last Thursday.

Japanese officials seem to realise that Mr. Bush cannot afford to go back to Washington empty-handed.

Diplomatic sources say he is likely to get concessions, including, for example, decisions by Toyota, Nissan and Honda to increase the value of car parts they buy from U.S. suppliers.

About 75 per cent of the \$40 billion U.S. trade deficit with Japan is because of imports of Japanese cars and car parts.

But Japan has made concessions in the past, and many U.S. businessmen and politicians see few results.

Should Mr. Bush's trip produce a similar outcome it will not only hurt him politically, but could also cause bitterness between the United States and the Asian economic superpower.

Some analysts see a negative fallout for Mr. Bush regardless of what he accomplishes in New Hampshire's Feb. 18 presidential primary, the nation's first.

"New Hampshire now has unemployment at 10 per cent, and every Democrat and Pat Buchanan will be there saying George Bush is over in Tokyo or Seoul... when he should be here debating with us," said Burton Pines of the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Meanwhile, a prominent human rights group said Saturday the Bush administration promotes "human rights at no cost," often placing foreign policy concerns above those of individual liberties.

In its annual survey of conditions around the world, Human Rights Watch accused the Bush administration of downgrading the importance of human rights in its foreign policy-making.

"The sad irony is that this policy of devaluation has become entrenched at a time when U.S. influence is exceedingly high," the private organisation said at the start of its 650-page report on 57 countries.

Soviet U.N. seat goes to Russia; others also covet permanent seats

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — No one objected publicly when Russia took over the Soviet seat on the U.N. Security Council, but plenty of countries feel they have a claim to a permanent council seat, too.

Economic powerhouses Germany and Japan, for example, have let it be known that they would like permanent Security Council seats, even without a veto. And if population is a reason for putting a country on the council, Brazil, India, and Nigeria are waiting in the wings.

The U.N. charter names only five countries — the victorious World War II allies — as eligible for permanent council seats, with veto power: The United States, Britain, France, "Republic of China," and "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

No one has ever made an issue of the fact that since 1971, the "People's Republic of China" has held the seat once occupied by the Nationalist ROC government that had to flee to Taiwan in 1949.

The General Assembly simply voted in 1971 to oust Taiwan and seat mainland Communist China, and on one has quibbled about the U.N. charter being out of date.

Now Russia has taken over the Soviet seat by simply sending a letter from Boris Yeltsin to the United Nations noting that the new Commonwealth of Independent States had agreed to the

move — no General Assembly membership-ratifying activity has been called for.

The argument is that Russia is the "continuation" of the Soviet Union, just as modern India is the "continuation" of British colonial India's U.N. membership.

The General Assembly set that precedent in 1947, when Pakistan split off from India and entered the U.N. system as a new state, and India simply retained its seat in the General Assembly.

But the power and prestige of a Security Council seat, and the antiquated geographic distribution of the permanent seats, are causing increased pressure from developing nations to amend the U.N. charter and revamp the council.

Of the current five permanent members, none is from Africa or Latin America. Three are European — British, France and Russia. China is the only Asian country, and the United States is in North America.

Proposals abound for rectifying the imbalance:

— Non-voting permanent seats for regional powers such as India, Brazil and Nigeria;

— Voting seats without veto power for world economic powerhouses such as Japan and Germany;

— Consolidating the British and French seats into a single European Community seat, and giving Japan a permanent seat with veto power.

Any of these plans would require amending the U.N. charter, a move that could result in Britain or France losing influence if the council is expanded, or even losing their seats altogether.

Not surprisingly, London and Paris are staunchly opposed to that possibility, and adamantly oppose reforms that would open the charter to revision.

One of their key arguments is that Japan and Germany, for instance, have constitutions that prohibit them from sending troops overseas.

If Japan and Germany cannot contribute to peacekeeping forces, they cannot hold permanent Council seats, the argument goes. Yet this point was never raised when those countries held temporary two-year seats on the council, of which there are 10.

The United States, which wants a single stable Russian vote on the Security Council, has been glad to go along with the magic act in which the Soviet Union suddenly rematerialised as Russia on the Council.

In Washington's view, it was far more manageable than the other option considered, in which all 11 republics in the new commonwealth would share the seat and have to coordinate their foreign policy on every question.

International legal scholars, such as Prof. Richard Gardner of Columbia University, have also noted that the U.N. charter limits U.N. membership to "states."

and say this rules out seats for the Commonwealth of Independent States, or the European Community.

If they are allowed in, then why not a seat for the Non-Aligned Movement? And the British Commonwealth? And Asean, the Association of South East Asian Nations?

The United States, Britain and France have lobbied hard to head off any challenges to Russia assuming the old Soviet U.N. seat, and none are anticipated.

But eventually the shifting balances in national wealth, power and population will make U.N. charter reform inevitable, perhaps as soon as within a year or two if Japan and Germany amend their constitutions to allow their participation in peacekeeping forces.

If the 1945 charter is finally amended, the new names of China and Russia can be added to it. Perhaps the council seats will be realigned and the old "enemies clause" can be revoked.

The U.N. charter, which has been so flexible in so many ways for a half-century, still allows U.N. members to take action against any World War II "enemy" they have yet to deal with.

Since Japan was still at war when the U.N. charter was adopted in 1945, Tokyo has long argued that the "enemies clause" is provocative and its deletion is a few decades overdue.

Burma, Bangladesh to hold talks on frontier clashes

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh and Burma will hold border talks Tuesday, the first since clashes between their forces eight days ago triggered a military alert on both sides.

"The date for the talks, to be held in the Burmese town of Maungdaw, has been set at a meeting Sunday between Burmese officials and the Bangladesh ambassador in Rangoon," a Foreign Ministry official said Sunday.

Tension between the two neighbouring states has run high since Burmese Muslim refugees fled into south-east Bangladesh and separatist guerrillas attacked Burmese border forces.

The Foreign Ministry official told reporters that the Burmese Ambassador to Dhaka, Soe Myint, had already left for Rangoon to prepare the agenda.

Bangladesh, which has 270 kilometres of border with Burma, proposed the meeting after Burmese troops were reported to have attacked a camp of Bangladesh border guards on Dec. 21, killing one soldier and wounding three.

Later a resident of Rezapara border village was killed and five injured by a bomb.

Bangladesh called the attacks a violation of a 1978 border agreement, demanded compensation for the losses and asked for a meeting between border forces to reduce tension.

When Rangoon failed to respond immediately, and intelligence reports came in of a Burmese military buildup along the common border, Bangladesh put its forces on alert.

"Bangladesh cannot remain in

different to recent incidents and a continued military buildup along the common border," a foreign ministry official said Friday.

Intelligence sources in Bangladesh said Burma has so far massed at least 25,000 regular troops to reinforce the border.

"They are still continuing the troops buildup, digging bunkers and trenches in what looked like preparations for a war," one intelligence source told reporters in southern Chittagong early Sunday.

He said Burma's answer to Dhaka's request for the meeting was received Sunday morning. The message said the reply had been delayed because of the illness of Burmese border guards' commander.

Relations between Dhaka and Rangoon deteriorated this year after thousands of Burmese Mus-

lims, called Rohingyas, fled into Bangladesh from what they said was Burmese army persecution.

Subsequent attacks by Muslim rebels, members of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), are reported to have killed at least 25 Burmese soldiers this month alone.

"We have reports that RSO guerrillas and members of the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front have launched several raids on the Burmese army near Maungdaw and Buthidaung towns, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides," one intelligence official told reporters in Cox's Bazar.

Burma believes the rebels, fighting for an independent homeland in western Burma's Muslim-majority Arakan state, draw support mainly from Burmese refugees in Bangladesh.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Drug said to halve AIDS deaths

LONDON (R) — A drug hitherto used to treat herpes and shingles has been found to halve deaths from AIDS in clinical trials, a British expert said Saturday night. Paul Griffiths, professor of Virology at London's Royal Free Hospital, said the discovery was a significant development. He said it raised hopes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) could eventually be as easily treated as diabetes so that infection with the HIV virus which causes the disease need no longer be regarded as a death sentence. Griffiths said the drug Acyclovir "is not a cure. I do not anticipate a cure. But it is an important contribution... A significant part of the illness and one of a series of drugs that will progressively reduce the rate at which people who are infected develop the disease." A first report on the drug was carried by the Sunday Times which described it as the most significant development in fighting the illness since the discovery five years ago of AZT, the world's first licensed drug to treat AIDS. The newspaper said clinical tests using Acyclovir on 300 AIDS patients in Britain, Germany and Australia had been so successful — halving the death rate on those who were treated with a cocktail of AZT and Acyclovir — that they had been halted.

Taiwan cargo plane crashes, 5 killed

TAIPEI (R) — A China Airlines Boeing 747-200 cargo plane carrying five crew crashed in northern Taiwan Sunday shortly after taking off from Taipei, a spokesman for the Taiwanese flag carrier said. The plane radioed it was having engine trouble and wanted to return to Taipei just before it hit a hill near the coastal village of Wanli, about 20 kilometres northeast of the capital, airline spokesman Lodge Lo said. All the crew were feared dead but the mountainous terrain was hindering rescuers trying to get to the site, Lo said. Flight CI 358 was bound for Anchorage.

Alaska with a full load of cargo. State radio quoted witnesses as saying the plane was on fire and trailing smoke before it crashed at about three p.m. (0700 GMT). Scores of rescuers with stretchers and ropes rushed to the crash site near a gold course in the hills outside the village, a Wanli police spokesman said. Taiwan's last major plane crash was in October 1989, when a China Airlines Boeing 737 crashed in the east of the island, killing all 54 passengers and crew. The island's worst aviation accident was the crash of a Far Eastern Airlines Boeing 737 in 1981, which killed 110 people.

U.K. Labour scents power in 1992

LONDON (R) — Britain's opposition Labour Party swept to a new opinion poll lead Sunday, vowing an election due in 1992 would end more than a decade of Conservative rule. Labour has not held office since Margaret Thatcher won power in 1979. But John Major, who replaced her as the Conservative prime minister 13 months ago, is contending with an economic recession and a slide in the value of the pound sterling. Mr. Major, 48, the youngest British premier this century, remains more popular than Labour's Neil Kinnock, a fiery Welsh orator. But Labour says the election, due no later than July, will be decided by voters' anger at what it calls a "stop-go straitjacket" imposed by the Conservatives on the economy. A Mori Opinion Poll in the Sunday Times gave Labour 44 per cent to 38 per cent for the Conservatives. The centrist Liberal Democrats and other minorities made up the balance. The Labour lead was up four points from a month ago. The poll, taken Friday, also found that while Mr. Major had a high personal rating of 51 per cent, only 24 per cent of those sampled expected the economy to improve next year. A drop in the value of sterling on the foreign exchanges may in coming days give voters new cause for their pessimism.

COLUMN

'Weeping' icon returned to church without jewels

NEW YORK (R) — The "weeping" icon of St. Irene Chrysostom, stolen by armed thieves from the New York five days ago, returned by mail to the Greek Orthodox Church where it attracted thousands of believers. But the icon, which won attention when churchgoers saw it weeping last week before the Gulf war, was without its jewels and frame, police said. A postman delivered the painting to Bishop Vigenios of Avon, the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the New York Borough Queens in a Manila envelope. It had been sent to him in the U.S. Mail. But just the painting, not the frame and jewels, was recovered, said police spokesman Scott Bloch. Police spokesman declined to say if there were any suspects. The envelope had no return address and police would not say where it was posted. Four men and a woman burst into the church Monday morning to open the bejeweled, wood-carved niche where the icon rested, making off with the robbery shocked Greek-Americans and brought hopes of believers to the church to pay for the icon's safe return. The image of St. Irene, the patron saint of peace and the sick, was encased in a frame of gold, amethysts and other gems valued by the bishop at \$800,000.

Miss Venezuela crowned 1991 Miss World

ATLANTA (AP) — Miss Venezuela Ninibeth Beatriz Jiménez, a 20-year-old industrial engineering student, was crowned Miss World 1991 Saturday night. Miss Jiménez competed against 78 other beauty queens from around the world. "I thought I would be among the finalists, but I was like a dream come true," Miss Jiménez, who is from Maracaibo, said. "I feel very privileged to be Miss World and I will try to be one around the world passing on goodwill." First runner-up was Miss Australia Lesmanie Budge; second runner-up was Miss South Africa Thabisa Davis. The other finalists were Miss Jamaica Sandra Fortner, 21, and Miss Namibia Michelle McLean, 19. The hometowns of the other winning contestants were not available. Miss Jiménez, who plays guitar and studied music and volleyball in her interests, will receive about \$100,000 for her year's reign doing charity work and traveling around the world, pageant officials said. The outgoing Miss World is Gina Marie Tolleson of Spartanburg, S.C. The contestants, ages 17 to 24, were judged on evening gown and swimsuit competitions, as well as personality and stage presence. The pageant was created in London in 1951.

Bugsy wins 8 Golden Globe nominations

LOS ANGELES (R) — The Bugsy, a flamboyant version of the life of gangster Bugsy Siegel, received eight Golden Globe nominations Friday, including Best Actor and Actress nominations for Warren Beatty and Annette Bening as the gangster and his companion. The film received best supporting actor nominations for British actor Kingsley and for Harvey Keitel. Barry Levinson was nominated Best Director and the film received nominations in the Screenplay and Best Original score categories. The Golden Globes are awarded each year to foreign reporters who attend the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and are considered a strong indication of who will win the Hollywood Oscar March. The Golden Globe Awards will be presented in Los Angeles on Jan. 18. Steven Spielberg's long-awaited \$60 million film Hook, an updated version of the Peter Pan fantasy, received only one nomination, for David Hoffman for Best Actor. Musical or Comedy for his Captain Hook. British actor Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster were nominated Best Actor and Actress for roles in the psychological thriller Silence Of The Lambs, which for second place with The King with five nominations. Robin Williams, who failed to receive a nomination for his nomination, along with star Jeff Bridges, for Best Actor in a Musical or Comedy film The Fisher King.

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